

GEORGIE WOODS

I'M ONLY A Man!



• Promoter

• Mass Communication Specialist

• Civil Rights Activist

By James G. Spady

Introduction by Kenny Gamble

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Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

**The Life Story
of
•A Mass Communicator
•Promoter
•Civil Rights Activist**

By James G. Spady

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***AfroAmericanization of Knowledge Series 4**

Includes Chronology, Awards, and Index

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Woods, Georgie | 2. Rock and Rhythm & Blues
Promoter-United States
Biography |
| 3. Disc Jockey/
Mass Communicator | 4. Black Studies |
| 5. History and Sociology | 6. Introduction-Kenny Gamble |
| 7. Afterword-Ed Bradley | |



by Charles G. Lee

Only A Man

by Kenneth Gamble & Leon A. Huff

Intro Adlib:

*A man
Will do right
And a man
Will do wrong
Help me to be strong*

Verse #1:

*Oh Lord, please forgive me
When I do wrong
Have mercy on me
I'm trying to do
The very best I can
I'm only a man
I'm only a man
I'm only a man*

Verse #2:

*Oh Lord, please stay with me
Every step of the way
I need you to guide
So I don't go
Don't go astray
I'm only a man
I'm only a man
I'm only a man*

Channel:

*I got faith in You
My faith is strong
To please You, that's
What I'm livin' for
That's why I always
Get down on my knees
And thank You, Lord
For all You've done for me*

Verse #3:

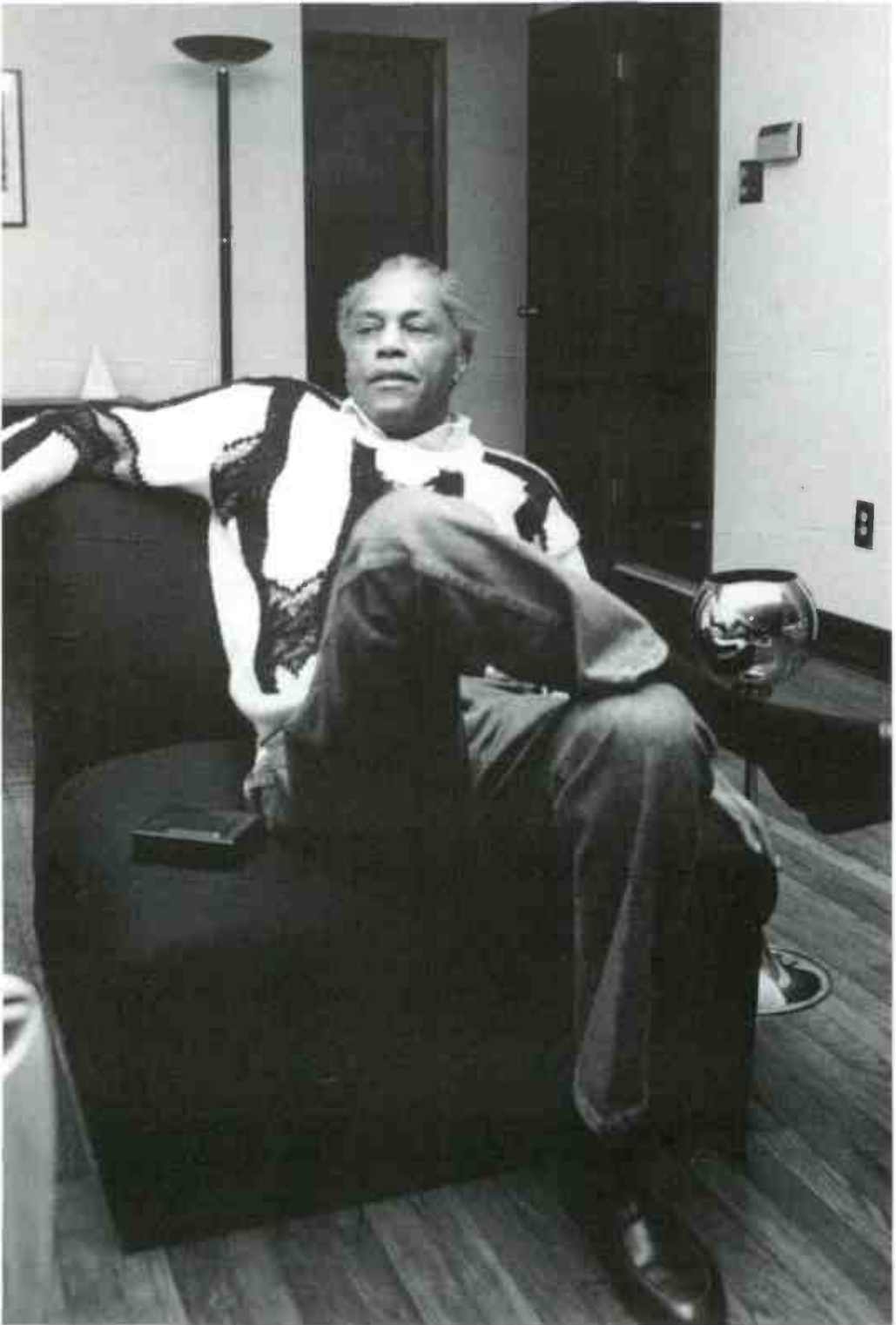
*Oh Lord, bless my family
Keep them safe
Protect them from all harm---
Give them their health and
Strength to carry on
Even when I'm done*

*'Cause I'm only a man
I'm only a man
I'm only a man
I'm only a man*

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Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man



W o r d

So What's The Scenario?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man-The Life Story of A Mass Communicator, Civil Rights Activist, and Promoter is a life history of a major figure. It is the very first full volume devoted to a Black disc jockey and the social and cultural world he inhabited. In that sense it contributes to a growing body of knowledge on Black communicators. What is the relationship between culture and society? How did Woods' presentation of African American expressive culture-Rhythm & Blues, Rock & Roll, and soul music impact the social order? Moreover was there a relationship between Woods' status as a cultural icon and his leadership status in society? What did he do to erase the stigma attached to being a Black disc jockey.

If we see communication as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified and transformed one would have to conclude that Georgie Woods is a mass communication specialist.

In James W. Carey's *Communication As Culture: Essays On Media And Society* (Irwin Hyman Ltd., London) it is stated, "Communication is at once a structure of human activity-activity, process, and practice-an ensemble of expressive forms, and a structures and structuring set of social relations. To describe communication is not merely to describe a constellation of enshrined ideas; it is also to describe a constellation of practices that enshrine and determine those ideas in a set of technical and social forms. As Clifford Gertz has argued it should not be necessary, at least since Wittgenstein, to insist that such assertion involves no commitment to idealism, to a subjectivist conception of social reality, to a belief that people act in circumstances of their own making and choosing, to a naive faith in the power of ideas, or to the romantic notion that the creative imagination can willfully triumphs over all the forces sedimented in nature, in society, in the

economy, of in the unconscious-biological, collective, lived (Gertz, 1981: 134). **Reality** is not, as Americans are so quick to make it a form of private property or a matter of taste. It is not the eternal given either, merely awaiting accurate representation in the individual mind once that mind is emptied of history and tradition, on the veil of false consciousness is lifted, or a better form of technology of communication perfected. **Reality is a product a product of work and action, collective and associated work and action."**

In attempt to locate the basis of George Woods' reality we have to examine his life in the social environment that shared him. In order to more fully comprehend Woods' reality today one must go back to the opening unit called "Origins." It is there that we locate many of the fundamental societal elements that shaped his communication style as well as the essence of his **everydayness** being. After carefully examining his life over a period of time, it is evident that Woods' notion of communication reality is consistent with Carey's with regards to collective and associated work and action. the *Georgiologue* section of this book bears witness to the assertion that Woods is a *working mass communication specialist*.

Currently, Georgie woods conducts a daily talk show on WHAT. Interestingly, it reflects only an aspect of his **reality**. One may ask how real is real and how important is it to get at his normative reality? This book moves beyond the radio persona to a more complete exploration of Woods the social being. On January 7, 1993, Georgie Woods will have been a radio broadcaster for 40 continuous years in one city. This is an amazing record by any standard. As you read these pages you will see ore clearly the driving forces within and outside this man.

In a public career that spans four decades, it is startling to find so few articles devoted to an introspective look at this towering figure in Philadelphia life. Many of the articles written by or about him could be classified as event-oriented. In researching the subject we located a number of articles appearing under his name in the *Philadelphia Tribune* and at least one first person

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narrative that appeared in the *Philadelphia Independent* at the height of the Civil Rights movement. It is a riveting account of his experiences in Selma, Alabama. Upon further queries we learn that he went to Selma at the request of a friend, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Accompanying George on this trip was Rev. Laurence Henry, an historical figure (minister, photographer, mass communicator associated with both Dr. King and Malcolm X) who had previously accompanied Malcolm X on his trips to Africa and the Middle East.

In the absence of journals, correspondences, diaries, work logs, station administration records, official personal documents, program booklets, or tapes of his radio and television programs, recording or other pertinent and reliable data, we had to turn to other types of sources to reconstruct his life. The only single body of information available was a scrapbook covering parts of his first few years as a radio broadcaster. In addition there were scattered business records pertaining to his career as a promoter. What he had kept intact for a number of years was a fairly sizable group of photo prints and negatives. When faced with this challenge how does one go about constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing Woods' life? Most of the sources needed by historians to create the past of an individual, an institution simply were not there in Woods case.

Beginning with whatever primary documents the subject has, you next move to research institutions, public libraries, etc. The Free Library of Philadelphia had a vertical file with only a few clippings on Woods. The photograph department have only **two** photos of him. This is most unusual considering his status as a well known public figure in **Philadelphia Life**. Not one single entry appeared in the card catalogue under his name or under Blacks disc jockeys. A close search of the Museum of Radio and Television Broadcasting in New York contained nothing on Woods. The largest collection of documents on Black people world wide is housed at the Schomburg Center for Black Research and History, New York Public Library. It had nothing on Woods. We next went to the Library of congress, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, and the library of Howard University's School

of Communication (all in Washington, D.C.), nothing on Woods. What we did find was a cooperative and supportive research staff at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

At the end of two days of exhaustive research in Black communications, Georgie's history, African American Studies, etc., we decided to go over to the School of Communication to speak with the Dean, Dr. Orlando Taylor. He was immediately interested when told that we were doing a book on a black disc jockey in Philadelphia. Much to my surprise, he shifted to a DJ character with the expressiveness, nuances, and driving force of an on air "personality." It turned out that the Dean of Howard's School of Communication had been one of those premiere Black disc jockeys from the 1950's. He had begun this career while still in high school. While discussing the direction of our research on Woods, Taylor reemphasized the significance of this pioneering work. His enthusiasm was only matched by the reaction of the former DJ and now New York talk show host, Gary "Imhotep" Byrd.

This brings us to another aspect of the project. It is impossible to discuss the exploration of sources without mentioning the overwhelming support we received from many scholars, mass communication specialists, and interested persons. We often got leads and extended discussions on aspects of Georgie's career moving through the streets of Philadelphia. Because they cared about Georgie they were often willing to spend an inordinate amount of time relating observations of and experiences with Woods.

Alva Stevenson has stated, "At a time when there are abundant negative, stereotypical media portrayals of African Americans, oral histories present alternative, truer images not only for African Americans but for all ethnic and cultural backgrounds." Oral history contributes immeasurably to this project.

We must begin with the more than 70 hours of interview time with Georgie himself. Close detail is paid to these interviews not only because they are so richly content and context laden but also because it is important for the reader to **experience** George communicating. Since we see interviews as speech events as well

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as historical sources, it was important for us to preserve the integrity of this interaction. You will note an occasional divergence in focus and emphasis. This has to do with our notions of the historical process and how it is to be represented. The interviews took place over a seven month period and occurred in a variety of places in Philadelphia and new York. We explored the institutions that provided the **output**, as well as the individuals who were the participants that generated both input and output. Additionally, we explore not only the events in which he participated but also how it felt to be in the mix. We are witnessing both cultural and social history revealed as Woods speaks.

Cultural history is one of the most complex and demanding branches of historical endeavor. It requires a range of disciplines to center it. The discourse remains in non-temporal order from time to time, closer to what is known as SASA time or UMUM time. Durative usage of the verb to be is both spoken and retained in accordance with the non-stasis flow of this visual text.

Biography writing in the African American world can be a collective ordering of the individual's and group's reality. In Woods' case his worlds are ideally explored through both his own remembering and that of the other interviewees contained in this volume.

Repetition in speech ritual is used to represent time concretely, providing a continuous temporal reference. That is what happens daily on the Woods' show. One could devote an entire book to Georgie's broadcast career and the role it played in shaping the society around him. What it suggests is the potential use of the broadcasting medium as a primary source of social change.

Finally, *Georgie Woods: I Am Only a Man* is the life story of an individual and a group. Woods' life is so closely linked to the masses of Black people and movements for democratic rights that to examine one is to examine the other. So what we have here is a whole body of new information regarding relationships among man, woman, and movement; music and culture formation.

In preparing this visual text we are indebted to many

individuals and institutions. Such a massive undertaking obviously collective activity. We had a good team. In this sense are indebted: Patricia, Shakir, Brother Joseph Eure, Michael Persaud, Charles G. Lee, Leandre Jackson, Jean H. Slappy, Dr. Derrick Mobley, Dr. Karim Diff, William Sweet, James Fladger, Harrison Ridley, Leroy Daggs, Kevin Brockenbrough, Hamidah Ahmad, Stefan Duprés, Lenny Singletary, Rodney Archer, Terry Lee Barrett, Shirley Dennis, Dr. Orlando Taylor, Jocko Henderson, Kenny Gamble, Georgie Woods, Curtis Blalock, Giles Wright, Cody Anderson, Linda Timmons, Dave Richardson, Elaine Jackson, Bonita See, Lawrence Johnson, Chuck D., Minister Louis Farrakhan, The Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Prince, Spike Lee, Pamm Jackson, Cheikh Mbacke Diop, Betty J. Curtis, Billy Anderson, The Gotta Cummm Up Squad out of L.A., Boogaloo Frazier, Don Cornelius, Percy Sutton, Gary Byrd, Jack The Rapper, J. H. Warren, III, Omar Karim, Christine Johnson, Al Sharperson, Danny Peterson, Teddy Diggs, II, Gracie Claude, Carol Armstrong, Beth Serito, Jimi Hendrix, The Spady Family, Patricia Smith, Diane Lachatanere, Akbaar Muhammad, Mary Mason, Isaac, Elaine, Janiah Armand, Isak, Milford Graves, Mwatabu Okantah, Chief Fela Sowande, Karen S., The Woods Family, Woody's Barbershop, Barbera Bullock, Selma Burke, William Dawson.

Crazy Shout Out to the PC International Press Possé, University of PA Library, City Archives of Philadelphia, Boston University Library, Princeton University, Free Library of Philadelphia, N.Y. Public Library, Moorland-Spingarn Research center, Acel Moore, Troy Albany, Flavor Flav, Cal Rudman, Keisha, Ed Bradley, Greg Broussard, Henry Reynolds, Sid Booker, Master Fard Muhammad, Queen LaT, Yusef, The Persaud Brothers (Mark & Irwin), Muarice "Mo' Better" Coffey, Philly Massive, Brooklyn Massive, Jersey Massive, Bloods, Crips, P.S.K., Hilltop Hustlers, Zulu Nation



Courtesy George Woods Collection





Leandre Jackson Photo



Introduction

By Kenny Gamble

When I first met Georgie Woods, I was about 13. I had already heard about him many years before that because I used to listen to him on the radio. I think everybody was very impressed with Georgie Woods, he seemed to be like the “Voice of the Black community.” How I happened to meet him personally was that I had always desired to sing and make records, so me and a friend of mine named Pat Gordon (who grew up in the same neighborhood), went up to the penny arcade on 16th and Market. That’s where we used to make those records. So what happened is that we walked to WDAS from S. Philly. We tried to get him to play this record, and when we got out to the station it was hard to get in. Man, that was a long walk from 15th and Christian Street all the way up to WDAS (Belmont and Edgely Road). But we found it. There must have been about eight or nine of us, from around the neighborhood that walked out there. When we got there, we couldn’t get in at first and then there was a gentleman named Herb Staton who was like Georgie’s assistant. It was me, Pat Gordon, and Billy Clark. This kid named Herb Staton was there. He said, “Y’all can’t get in there.” We said, “We want to see Georgie Woods. We got a record, we want him to play our record.” He said, “You can’t see him right now.” So we stayed out there. We were playing in the yard and everything, because it was beautiful.

Eventually George came out. He said, “What do y’all want?” We said, “we want you to play our record.” He said, “I can’t play this record. This ain’t no record, this is from the penny arcade.” So we felt good because he came out and talked to us. He told us that we had to a recording company. So we all walked back to South Philly. A few years went by and when I got a little older I started coming out to the station. I met Max Leon, I met Bob Klein, and all these people. I used to go the store for them. I used to go the store for George. His favorite sandwich was liverwurst and onions. I used to go get it for him every day. Then I got a little

older and I got my driver's license. Jimmy Bishop used to give me the keys to his car. I was driving their cars. You see I was getting in. I was learning all the time about the music business, about the record business just by being around there. I saw promotion people, I saw how people got their records in, I saw how they judged the records. I would help George pick records sometimes. A couple of times I even got on the radio, like an announcer. I was starting to be with Max Leon, I used to shine his shoes. Larry Daley was out there as a disc jockey, so I knew everybody, I knew all the disc jockeys and everybody. I was there trying to fit in and not only that, I was able to get in the shows at the Uptown Theatre.

The show that I remember most at the Uptown was a show that had everybody on it. It had the Temptations. It was the first time I saw the Temptations and the Four Tops and Smokey and the Miracles and Martha and the Vandellas. It was the "Motor Town Revue" that was there. Georgie had brought that there. I stayed all day long. I couldn't leave. And they had maybe four or five shows a day. I got behind stage because I was working back there, too. I used to go get chicken sandwiches for them. I was helping out. They used to give me little tips, like four or five dollars. I used to go to Pearl's (the highly respected Black woman whose kitchen was right across the street. I'd go get the chicken sandwiches for them, come back and ask them if anybody needed me to do anything else. So then I got a car. I got a station wagon. A Chevy station wagon. This was like 1961. One day I remember they were having a show up there, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles were late coming into the airport. So Bishop asked me to go pick them up at the airport. I had never even been to the airport. I didn't even know where the airport was. So I drove to the airport. Man, I thought it was like going to New York City. It was so far. Cause I grew up in the inner-city...I mean, that was such a far off part of town. All I knew was downtown and South Philly, and going to the Uptown. When I picked Smokey Robinson and them up, I had started then to write songs and Smokey Robinson was real nice to me. He was very appreciative that I picked him and the Miracles up. From that day I developed a relationship and a friendship with Smokey Robinson. As far as Georgie was concerned, I started to

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get older, George became more powerful. He was involved in the freedom struggle and everything. The next thing that comes to my mind is a picture of Georgie Woods at Girard College. I heard him talking about, "come on down to Girard College," and this and that. I said, "what's that man doing!" So I went down to Girard College and I saw. That's the first time that I realized that there was a problem between Black people and white people. Because see, growing up in South Philly, we never had any fear of white people. In fact white people would stay away from our neighborhood. So we never had any kind of interaction with white people, period. The public school system didn't teach us anything about our culture or our heritage or anything like that. So the Girard College demonstrations sort of opened my eyes to discrimination. When I went up to Girard College I felt bad. I felt bad for us as a people. But I felt good that Georgie Woods was there because this was somebody that I knew. And he was standing up on a truck. A flatbed truck, with Cecil Moore and Freedom George. That's when I first met all these guys. Freedom Smitty and Stanley Branche. Mainly I knew George. I didn't know the rest of these people. And when they were talking about how Girard College would not admit Black people, and how racist Stephen Girard and his whole system had been, it really opened my eyes up. From that day on I started to be more aware. It changed my whole life because, like I said, I had never thought of a conflict such as that between Black people and white people. I didn't really know about segregation in the South. I mean my mother knew about it, but she really didn't tell us anything about it. That was something Black people basically were trying to forget about. They didn't talk about it. So the movies that we went to (I went to the Royal and the Globe) were all Black movies. When we went to the Royal and the Globe, there weren't any white people there. I mean where we ate, and the church we went to were all Black. At the time I was growing up I went to Kingdom Hall. Basically it was all Black. Maybe we had like a white overseer every now and then. But I mean I wasn't thinking like that. We were brought up to love everybody. You know, "love your neighbor" and so forth and whatever. So, that's when I started to be aware of racial problems .

and civil rights and the whole thing. I started to form my own opinions of it. Even at that time I started to look at it. And I saw how happy George and the community were when they were able to break down that system and break down that law. I'm telling you, in our neighborhood, in South Philly (20th and South, 20th and Kensington, 18th and Carpenter, all around there) you would never see white people. We did not go down there near 5th and Mifflin (Crosstown). We didn't walk around Moore Street, across the tracks, way down there. We didn't go there, and people sort of respected one another. Territories were respected over there. And so I became more conscious of Black people and the position that we were in and still are in as a people. And I started watching Martin Luther King. I saw George when he was with Martin Luther King, and saw how active he was. Now he wasn't just a disc jockey, he wasn't just Georgie Woods at the Uptown, he was different from everybody on the radio. I'm talking about in the whole country, you tell me one other disc jockey in the country that stuck his neck out like Georgie Woods. And I've been in the music business most of my life. I don't know nobody else in the industry that was as active and as vocal and as loyal to Black people as Georgie Woods. I mean as a disc jockey, I don't know anybody else, that was as vocal and out front. He put himself out there. He put himself in danger many times. He used the microphone not just for making records or making people feel good (because he made a lot of people feel good, he made people happy), he also used that microphone to disseminate a lot of information, and to help the struggle for Black people. So that to me was helping build my character as a person. So you're a product of your environment. I was in the environment. I looked at Georgie Woods as a person that I not only admired from a music point of view, I can't even say how much he helped me. I mean he broke all my records. Some of them he didn't even like, he'd say, "I ain't playin this one." That was good too, because then you know that made me work harder, you know what I'm sayin. I said well I got to get one that George could play, 'cause when he liked one, he might play it 15 times in a row. And I'd say, "Oh Lord, George loves the record. I know I got a smash." That was because

I knew that he was my mentor. He was my friend. He was Georgie Woods. He was hard because everybody was after him and he was a star. He was a superstar. Even today he's hard, you know what I mean. But he's also very soft and he's a good person. Lots of times he has been involved in some things where people have tried to use him, his goodness. And so that makes a person hard and that's good for you, because you learn from your mistakes. So he was not only an inspiration to me and helped me to get into the music business, he also helped me once I got in. I know for a fact that he had talked to disc jockeys. He was one of the most respected disc jockeys in the whole United States. He used to ask all the disc jockeys in other parts of the country, "Man, are you working with Gamble?" He and Jimmy Bishop. They used to go around saying, "Man you playing Gamble's record." They were like promotion men. They helped establish me on a nationwide basis. Georgie would say to Rodney Jones (in Chicago), "Oh, yeah, that's my man." All he'd have to do is tell Rodney Jones that "I'm his man and you ought to take care of him." When I'd go to Chicago, they'd say, "Oh, this is Georgie's man" you see, or "this is Bishop's friend." I learned a lot about giving shows. I learned a lot about record hopping. I first learned of the National Association of Television and Radio Announcers (NATRA) through George and Bishop and all them. They are the ones that helped put it all together. NATRA was fighting for Black people to have more job opportunities, more respect, and improve in the music industry. So he helped pave the way, not just for me, but for everybody. Naturally when I got to be of a certain age, I tried to emulate many of the things that the people I respected were doing. And so I was blessed to be able to get hit records. That's why I started the Black Music Association (BMA). NATRA was the forerunner of the BMA. NATRA had a lot of problems with Rodney Jones and George and all the rest of them. I took over really where NATRA left off. NATRA was basically for radio announcers. So a lot of the feedback that came from NATRA was that the promotion men and artists and the retail stores wouldn't even have a voice in it. So in forming the BMA, we opened it up to retailers, artists, disc jockeys, and performers, everybody. We

had a division for every group of people that formed a board. And it worked pretty good. So in doing that we tried to do the same things and continue the same things that Georgie, Rodney, and Bishop had established. They tried to get more opportunities for Black people, you know trying to break down the walls of racism in the industry, and I think we did a pretty good job. There are new people now in the industry that wouldn't be there, I wouldn't be there if it hadn't been for Georgie Woods, and Bishop, and Rodney Jones, and few other people, Al Perkins, you know that generation. There's a lot of them.

I think that there's a need for a person like Georgie Woods, because history needs to know about Georgie Woods. African-American people have not done enough to document their history. We have a chance now that we are a little more conscious than we were around twenty to thirty years ago. White people document everything, in anticipation. They have films, they have audio. Everything you can think of so that they can document their history. And that's why the Black man today does not get credit for anything that he has really done because he did not document everything. We're just finding out in this generation here that it was a Black man who invented the stoplight. It was a Black man. Where would the world be without a stoplight? So Georgie Woods is a man who inspired not only me, but many people like me and I think that I would like to even know more about Georgie. I'd like to have a book on Georgie Woods so that I can give it to my children and say that this is a man. Read this book about Georgie Woods, because here's a man who made it against all the odds. He was able to come from humble beginnings. He's been with Presidents. He's been with Kings. I mean he's been with everybody. I mean he's risked his life for many. So he's a legend. If we don't do the book on him, somebody else will do it and I think that we will do it correct. I think that it's time for us as a people to document our history as it really is and not let somebody else come and write a book about Georgie Woods and cloud the issues. You know there are so many books out on Malcolm X. It was great that Malcolm X did that book with Alex Haley- the Autobiography. He was involved in it himself and that's authentic. But, you

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have books that's coming out now on Malcolm X, by other people, especially white people, who are writing, that try to defame the man. They try to make the man look like he was less than what he is. There is a need for a book on Georgie Woods. People all over the United States, especially those in the music industry, want to know more about Georgie Woods. People in Philadelphia think Georgie Woods is just known here in Philadelphia.

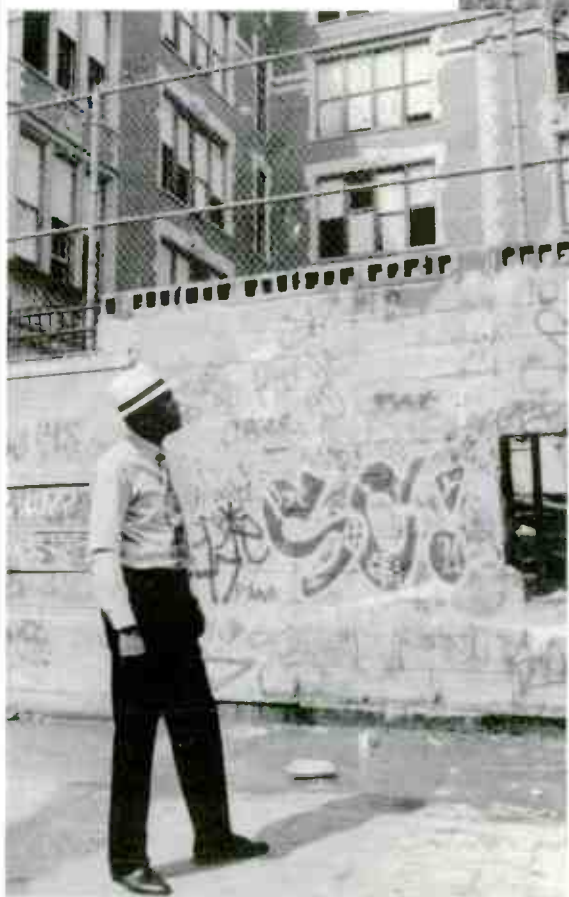
From the public standpoint here, everybody knows him in the street. The average person elsewhere might not know him. But if you asked a disc jockey, if you ask anybody in the music business, "do you know Georgie Woods?", everyone of them would tell you, "yeah I know Georgie Woods". They may not only know of him, but they may know of his deeds and his actions. So I think that this book here will be able to show the strengths and the weaknesses of Georgie Woods. Young children in the future generations will be able to read this book, they will be able to get a good focus on even themselves, and I think it will encourage people to fight against all odds. I think he deserves it. Not everybody deserves it. Everybody doesn't deserve a book. But Georgie Woods deserves to have a book, because I think that it's going to be interesting reading. When he goes to all the schools and everything, I see the response of the children and the adults. I would say 99% of the people in this city, and that's both Black and white (you see people don't know that the white people know Georgie Woods also), grew up on Georgie Woods on the radio. They always lied about white people not listening to Black radio. Everybody I meet including white people say, "Oh, I know Georgie Woods, I used to listen to him on the radio." There's a reason why in radio they don't give the Black stations the numbers for listeners, because then they can cheat them out of the advertising dollars. So Georgie Woods is a trailblazer.

In fact we plan to do many things in the future that's going to help keep promoting Georgie Woods. And what our intention is, is to have Georgie Woods, and his good works, and his name live forever. And the only way you can do that is to write books, and to have promotions, and to continue to tell people about the good works of Georgie Woods, because if we don't do it, nobody else

will. This book will be able to be used in the colleges and the communication schools. This book should be required studying because it will be something to let young people who want to be in communications know about Black disc jockeys. I mean this is the premiere African-American disc jockey in America. I mean out of them all. We had it all here in Philadelphia, we had Georgie Woods and Jocko Henderson, here in Philadelphia. You can't get no better than Georgie Woods and Jocko. But Jocko was a disc jockey, whereas Georgie Woods was a Civil Rights activist, humanitarian, and a disc jockey. I mean he was more than just a disc jockey. This man wasn't just playin those records. His life had more meaning. He had a lot of meaning to his life. He has helped champion many causes. Sometimes he even hurt himself. He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to do anything but play records, give his shows, and go home, and make a lot of money. That's all he had to do. He didn't have to do what he did. And so I appreciate Georgie Woods, and that's why I want to do as much as I can to help establish him as a role model for our people in the industry. He is a role model of determination, showing that people can make it if they have the desire to do so. That's what I think this book means.

Changing Changes in C Major

Whether behind or
in front of the
7 ball, Georgie knows
these mean streets.



Standing there
Always knowing that
His Destiny is
Linked
to the fallen Trees
The eclipsed moon
the jazz motion
and graffiti

Shadowless
Sun
Face
Two/Too

-copyright, 1992 James G. Spady

Leandre Jackson Photo



Return To Harlem

Harlem. Home of the survivors. Deep dark secret of the nether world. Location of the Apollo. Spirit Lives. The store window exhibits a bus ride and a forty. Two stops up and you're in Washington Heights. High above Washington and Jefferson or was it Washington and Clinton in Brooklyn? No. This is Harlem. Sun shines brightly over this borough. Deep dark space with a soul to bear. Not to borrow. Or to barter. Soul people flow in and out of this city within a city. The mayor says, Gracie Mansion is my house but my home is Harlem.

Harlem Gallery: From the Inside

(For Melvin Tolson)

The bars on Eighth Avenue in Harlem glow real yellow, hard against formica tables. They speak of wandering ghosts and Harlem saints; the worlds lay slick on greasy floors: rain-wet butt in the junkie's mouth, damp notebook in the number runner's hand. No heads turn as the deal goes down- we wait.

---Larry Neal

And we wait. Knowing all the time that there is still much to see in Harlem. Streets are crowded. Action shot. Back and force. Movement and memories. Moving away from what Kafka recognized as the 'authorial being,' into the Harlem Gallery that is preeminently, 'Hip Hop being'.

Georgie Woods is in the midst of it. Like they say, he is in the mix. Not Sir Mix-A-Lot or O.G. Style. Woods is moving on time, in time, this tyme, Triple Helix. He may have turned away from this grounding space but he could never separate entirely from this strange, mysterious, perhaps dangerous and always alluring space. There are so many reasons people come to Harlem. Probably even more reasons why they leave. Like Larry Neal be saying (durative usage) :

RETURN TO HARLEM

the signifying monkey

Bud Powell

Trane

Prez

Chano Dozo

Eloise Moore- all

falling faces in the Harlem rain

asphalt memory of blood and pain.

Georgie Woods, too, has his memory of blood, sweat and pain.

Like Melvin Tolson, before him, Georgie Woods had been here and gone.

Is it that the everyday world we know is also the actual known and recognized world? Or is it that the inner world we experience remains the property of a single narrator?

“The Bars on Eighth Avenue in Harlem

glow real yellow, hard against formica tables.”

Flashback. Memories of the very day we asked Georgie Woods to return to Harlem. He looked shocked. Strange countenance. Way back memories and a typical Woods response. “New York. If I don't get lost. They have changed things around so much. I don't think y'all want to go where I came from.”

Origins. Destinies. Discoveries. Home to Harlem on a Wednesday morning. Woods returned to reconnect, rediscover, reveal and restore the whole. It had been forty years since he moved away. More years since he had stayed in the area we were visiting.

Uptown. The Big Apple. Gustave Flaubert wanted to transform reality through style. Georgie Woods did it. He actually transformed reality through styles and the history of a people was changed. De-chained. Memories and the history of a race, the progeny of a people.

There are many realities in Harlem. Destinies are fluid like so many things in this gallery. Harlem is a space of contrasts. In and out. Up and down. Subways and Summertime. It's a place to reckon with. For Georgie Woods it is a place to reassemble the scattered past, schools, churches, homes, neighbors, recreation centers, record shops, pool halls and work places.

Returning to the very streets that he grew up in. This day

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

Georgie Woods was determined to find the places that meant something to him during his formative years. He had spent most of this (1992) year visiting school after school--from elementary to high schools. His message was on point wherever he went. 'Stay in school.' Pursue your dreams and goals. "What was it like for you when you were growing up Mr. Woods? Were there favorite teachers that you recall? What about the physical plant itself? What happens to a dream deferred?

Lenox Avenue is a big street

The sidewalks are extra wide-thru and four times
the size of a regular Fifth Avenue or East 34th
sidewalk- and must be so to contain the
unemployed
vigiling?? Negro males
and police barricades.

---David Henderson

Nothing can barricade vivid memories. Way back history. Another place and time. Georgie Woods is standing in front of his old school.

Q: Mahalia Jackson School. Is this the door you would go in George?

G: This used to be P.S. 5. This was built in 1958. What did they do? How did you get in there. It's locked up.

Q: It's the same location right?

G: Yeah. It has gotten so bad they had to lock the doors. Let's see if the other school is around.

Q: So this is now P.S. 123, formerly P.S. 5. *[A woman appears in the window of the school]* Is this the old P.S. 5?

Harlem Lady: P.S. 5 is where the yard was.

G: They tore my school down? I went there in 1940. I was in school at P.S. 5 and I was looking for it.

RETURN TO HARLEM

Harlem Lady: The trees in the back of the yard that's where P.S. 5 was.

G: I wasn't off by far. Yeah this is it. There was a school here a big tall school here. Let's see if P.S. 90 is still around.

Q: Is that the first school you went to when you came to New York, George?

G: Nope, it was the second. It was elementary school. I went to kindergarten, before elementary.

Q: This is the busy part of town up here.

G: It wasn't like this before. We had an elevated line used to run up and down this street here. We had the 8th ave. 'El'. They tore all that down and sent it to Japan. Sent all that steel to Japan. We'll be on 147th in a minute. 145th street looks messed up.

Q: That used to be a nice thoroughfare didn't it George?

G: Yeah. My street I think is all torn down. The house ain't there. 147th street is right there.

Q: Where would the house have been?

G: 2774 that was the street number! It ain't there. It was where the lot is.

Q: At least they're doing something there. You can look at it that way.

G: This is a bad street here. This is where the house was right here. You see 2774? I lived on the top floor. The sixth floor.

Q: [Commentary] 2774, the place that Georgie first moved when he came to the city is no longer there. It's a vacant lot with chip

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

bags all over it. The irony of it is that we are standing at 147th and 8th ave. reflecting on something from nearly sixty years ago.

G: Let's go around the corner and see if that one is there. P.S. 90. *That was 2774 8th avenue. No longer there. That's the first house I lived in when I came to New York.*

Q: It took 2 days to get up here?

G: On the train yeah.

Q: You had to change a lot of places?

G: I ain't changed nowhere. We came up on the coach.

Q: This is Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. now.

G: It was 7th ave when I lived here.

Q: Were those apartment buildings here George?

G: No, they weren't there. They didn't have no shit like that around. The school ain't around either. Yep, the school is gone baby. I see a sign though. It's gotta be around here I see a school sign. It was around here. It ain't here no more. Right down there. I know where I'm going. I ain't crazy. There's the school there. No, there ain't no school there. Look at the building.

Q: Well what are the buses there for George?

G: Yeah this was the school. P.S. fucking 90. They tore that school down. It was 100 years old, I guess it's time they should have torn it down.

Q: Only thing still standing is Bobby's Record Shop.

G: There's a lot of things still standing, but they're messed up. Look at the houses. People lived in all these houses here. Let me

RETURN TO HARLEM

see if I can go on up the hill here [Uptown].

Q: Moved up in the world when you moved up here, George.

G: That's what they said.

Q: Were there many mom and pop stores that blacks owned during that time period?

G: Yeah, basically, but there were a lot of Jewish stores.

Q: Weren't no Koreans?

G: What? What you talking about. At that time? Koreans? All we had were some Chinese. That's all.

[Riding through Sugar Hill, George comments.]

G: This is where all the rich niggers lived. Up here. Up on St. Nicholas avenue.

Q: Was there much contact between those who had money and those who didn't have money George?

G: Yeah. They were better than we were. They tried to stay away from the 'low-lives'. That's what they called the people down there, 'low-lives'.

Q: Did you have any part time jobs around this area George?

G: No. Brown Bomber used to be up here somewhere, the restaurant.

Q: Named after Joe Louis?

G: Yeah.

Q: Joe was well thought of at that time wasn't he?

G: Yeah, well...he wasn't really well thought of he was just always a hero. But I thought he was stupid. I thought he was dumb. He married that girl, then he gave all his money away. He started fighting for the government and they used to give shows for him. My sister used to live down the street but she died.

Q: How many of your sisters are still living?

G: Three. Irene is the last one. The rest of them are all here. Irene is the one up in the Bronx.

Q: Where are we now- the Council Center for the Problems of Living.

G: That used to be the bar. The bar that I was telling you about was right there. I used to live there. The second house I lived in. 510 West 146th street. This stuff wasn't even here. None of this stuff was there.

Q: 147th and Amsterdam ave.

G: I feel like a stranger here. All this new stuff here. These are new people here. They weren't here then. All blacks lived here then.

Q: George's Liquor store there.

G: I ain't have nothing to do with it.

Q: Must have been a part owner George.

G: What the hell is that they got there? Coconut water ice. These are Cubans. They ain't even Puerto Ricans. What is that stuff there? Hurry up. What happened to the movie that used to be here? That was our movie there. It used to be the Loews movie.

Q: Woolworth's is still there. The poolroom, over top was that there then?

RETURN TO HARLEM

G: Is that there now? Yeah, let's go up there when I come back. That's where I used to hustle pool. That's where Diahann Carroll used to live. 545, I'll see in a minute. We used to have an elevator in there, and everybody who lived in there used to think they were better than everybody else cause they had a elevator in the building. That's where Diahann Carroll used to live at. Right there. And wouldn't speak to nobody.

Q: Had a white friend.

G: Wasn't no white kids around. She had her nose up in the air. She was a young kid then. She went to school with my niece. 510 that's the house. Right there.

Q: Get a picture of that. Somebody's in your apartment.

G: They named an elementary school here after Adam Clayton Powell. There was no school there. 145th street. Let me see if El Mundial (The World) our restaurant is here. This is where I used to eat rice and peas. Bickford's restaurant used to be on the corner where I used to eat all the time.

Q: Were these always stores up here?

G: These were all stores, businesses, shops. The liquor store was always there. And there restaurant was a restaurant called Bickford's. You could go in there and eat. They had good food in there. I used to go in there and eat on Friday nights and get a show, cause all kinds of things were going on *out there*! I'd go there and get entertained. That was my entertainment. You'd get a live show. That was then. Well they're out here now. Look what's out here on a Tuesday. In the middle of the day. I don't know if we can go in that poolroom or not.

Q: Why not?

G: You can't just go in no pool room in Harlem, you crazy?

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

Q: K&J Tobacco wholesalers. They wholesale tobacco there.

G: That ain't all they got. Trust me. You get out here and walk they're going to try and sell you some dope before you get in the car.

Q: I wonder what used to be here a discotheque?

G: No that used to be a theatre.

How long has the pool room been closed? Or is it really closed to everyone. Nearby someone is watching. Like Kev said, "I sit by myself because I'm a loner. But I calculate everybody that I see." Mike knows that, too. The door to the poolroom is neither open nor closed.

somehow
all we can remember of American history
is the clatter of gunfire
in the Audobon ballroom
the chest-bared screams
of Malcolm of all of us
over backwards in blood
So much blood in this soil

---David Henderson

And so many spinning heads. Looking for an open poolroom. AN open bar, a key to some door. Desolate. Mourning. Just a poolroom and the history of a race. Reminiscence. When asked for more details on the poolroom George said less. This poolroom represents something special in his life. It was an active force for maintaining stability after his mother died. However you see it, the men who gathered and gambled in this pool spot had less cynicism than their predecessors and more realism than their successors. George learned to center his own life in a public place. All these memories rush him like an angry cop beating a black man.

RETURN TO HARLEM

We're on the upper end of Broadway. Distanced from the broadway of Columbia University but not quite in the Funky, Funky Broadway of yesteryear. The houses George lived in are gone but the spots, places/venues are still there. So are the memories.

G: There were many fights in there. If you get somebody that didn't know what was going on and you beat them, you're a pool shark and they want their money back. Man get back!

Memories.

G: I remember everything. We used to sit down and played. We played ball. When I wasn't playing ball I was up there playing pool. That's the place. That's where I did a lot of hustling up there. Met a lot of people. A lot of people from the Hispanic community used to come up there. I'd spend 10-15 hours a day in that place just playing pool. I didn't have a job or nothing to do so that's where I spent my time at. I'd play pool in there and win enough money to go to the corner and eat at Bickford's restaurant. That's where I'd go. It used to be a nice restaurant but now I don't know what it is.

Q: What did you use to order when you went in there?

G: Actually what I wanted to get today was some red beans and rice. Because that's what I remember most about 145th and Broadway is the red beans and rice. That's what I like but I can't find the restaurant. I like red beans and rice and rice and chicken, "arroz con pollo," that's what they call it in spanish. That's what I ask for in a Spanish restaurant. Maybe I'll find a restaurant somewhere around here. I like that. That's good. Everything has changed. Everything has changed. This was a beautiful cosmopolitan avenue. There was no dirt on the street, there were no boarded up buildings. We had trees and flowers. Everything was pretty around here. And to live on Broadway was like living in paradise. And look at it now. It was paradise. To live around the corner there

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where Diahann Carroll was raised up at, I doubt if she ever comes up here to see the house she used to live in. But she was raised in that house right around there. And she went to school with my niece. That's how I know she was there. Things change. All gone. Adam Clayton Powell lived down there with Hazel Scott. Right down there on Riverside Drive. You used to see them out there walking every morning, they used to go for walks. When I was a kid. He was in Congress then raising hell. He was preaching.

Q: His church wasn't too far from here was it?

G: Down 130 something street. I don't know where that church was, cause I don't mess with them churches too much.

Q: Now the *discotheque* was that a dance hall at that time?

G: That was a big movie theatre in the neighborhood called Loews Theatre. All the top pictures used to go in there and play. A lot of seats in that place. A big theatre. Like everything else, it changed. And as new people come into the communities I think it helps destroy a community too because you don't have that ethnic background. Although it was bad here then, too, even when it was all black it was bad. So I don't know if having all of these foreigners over here is helping. They're talking about making it a utopia for all races, but I don't know if that's possible. You don't see dogs and cats, and fleas and flies messing with each other. I think human beings are going to have to have that same kind of concept because Indians are going to be with Indians, white folks are going to be with white folks, and black folks are going to be with black folks. That's the way it's supposed to be. God didn't create it no other way. But we're trying to change God's creation with this integration shit. And it can't work. It's not going to work.

Q: Were there many Hispanics who lived here during that time period?

G: Oh yeah, we had Hispanics.

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Q: Were there any frictions between blacks and hispanics at that time?

G: No. We got along pretty good. They always thought that they were a little better than we were. Once that was overcome. Once they found out they were in the same boat as we were then they were cool. But first they thought, because their hair was straight and they were a little bit lighter that they were better than we were. But once the white man started to kick them in their ass then they said hey we ain't no different than the black guys. Then we started getting along better.

Q: Where was the pawn shop?

G: They had them all over. The one that I was talking about was on 145th and 8th ave.

Q: Where did the riot take place at?

G: Down at 125th street. It started at a hotel on 125th and 8th avenue. When they shot the soldier. This was during WWII, the beginning of it, and they had a big one that time. It wasn't really a riot, all people did was break in stores all night. You couldn't get a glass of milk in Harlem after that riot. All the stores were looted. It wasn't no riot where black people attacked white people. It wasn't like that. I don't know why they call these things riots, cause there's not been one where blacks have attacked whites. They might go in some stores and break into some stores that some people own. That's not a riot. That's a loot. That ain't a riot. A riot is when you attack someone from the other race. Then you have a riot. This is something else here.

Q: Was that the cleaners where you got your clothes cleaned at?

G: That place is new. We're going back 50 years ago, 40 years ago. I'm telling you that was here. The only thing that's still here is that pool room.



Leandre Jackson Photo



Leandre Jackson Photo

**Georgie points to the building where he once lived.
Memories. Destinies. Returns...**

Leandre Jackson Photo



Streets Uptown

**9 To The Universe
Beyond Yonder
Is where Georgie
Stayed**

**The Eighth Ave
Train moves
crazy past**

**In Washington Heights
you can still hear
the music of Wilfredo
Vargas, Juan Luis Guerra
and 440,Cuco Valoy,
Fernando Villalona
(El "Marimba")
Sergio Vasques,
Las Chicas del Can,
and of course
El General**

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**New York Disc Jockey and talk show host, Gary Byrd
Raps as Georgie Woods Stands**



Woods introduces his potato chips to young ones in Harlem



George returns to the record store where he shopped 40 years ago-‘Bobby’s Happy House’, 125th and 8th Avenue. It is located less than twenty blocks from where he first lived in Harlem. Bobby Robinson’s daughter prepares to fulfill an order as Woods looks on. Robinson pioneered in producing Doo Wop and Hip Hop on the Enjoy Label.

ORIGINS

On January 7, 1953 Georgie Woods started his broadcast career in Philadelphia. He succeeded the pioneer black disc jockey, Ramon Bruce, who joined the staff of WHAT radio seven years earlier.

In a perceptive account from that period, Georgie Woods stated the following: "There is a change taking place in the so-called rhythm and blues field. Today, as never before, white teenagers are buying rhythm and blues tunes. Reason, the younger generation is away from the old idea that rhythm and blues music is strictly for Negroes. In this writer's opinion, rock and roll music is the rhythm of America and there are many who will agree. Here's an example of how the change is taking place. In New York City a disc jockey by the name of Alan Freed, formerly known as the "Moon Dog", plays only rock and roll music and yet he has more white listeners than Negro listeners. Proof of the pudding is in the pie. January 14 and 15 he gave an affair at the St. Nicks Arena and from the report he received first hand, it went like this. The affair was a complete sellout, no seating for both shows at \$2.00 per; and that night there were more whites in attendance than Negroes. So you can see why this young man has so many white listeners playing only rock and roll tunes or rhythm and blues, whichever you prefer. I prefer rock and roll [aesthetic independence and self definitional]. A change for the better is taking place and I hope one can't see any wrong in the change."

Back and forth motion. Change. On the move. En route. That is Woods from the very beginning. Origins. Way back history. Roots. Triple origins.

(Interview with Georgie Woods at home)

SPADY: Let's begin with 1332 Wallace St. Is that the first place you lived when you came here?

WOODS: Who told you that? That was my cousin's place.

Q: What was their name?

A: White.

Q: Why did you come to Philly in the beginning?

Origins

A: I got a job here. I had worked in a station in New York, WWRL, and I had gotten fired from that job because they didn't like me to play certain music.

Q: What were you playing?

A: A record called, "One Mint Julep" by the Clovers, and that was kind of risqué at that time. Because it had alcohol in it, and they didn't like you to play that kind of music. So they told me I needed more experience, they told me to go out of town and get some experience. I was reading Jet magazine and I saw where one of the dj's here had quit.

Q: Was that Ramon Bruce?

A: Yeah! So I called the station, and told them I was a New York disc jockey, with experience. I was dynamite. And they said, "well come on down we'll give you a job". That was 1953.

Q: Was January 7, 1953 the first time you went on the air in Philadelphia?

A: Yeah!

Q: It was an evening show wasn't it?

First Black Morning Show In Philadelphia Broadcasting

A: No, it was an afternoon show. I started off in the morning. I had two shows. I had "Wake Up Philadelphia", which was the first black show in the morning. And I had the afternoon program called, "The SNAP Club". That's where we played the jazz, gospel, and rhythm and blues.

Q: So you were formatted for two hour daily?

A: Yeah in the afternoon it was 2 hours, 3-5 p.m.. And in the morning I did from 7 to 8 (a.m.).

Q: Was that more gospel oriented?

A: No, only a little bit of gospel, not that much.

Q: Was Kae Williams playing gospel then?

A: He wasn't here then.

Q: So from 7 to 8 you were playing rock'n roll?

A: Yeah, and then it got so popular they extended it to 7-9.

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

And it went on from there.

Q: When you came in, did Dolly Banks interview you for the job?

A: Well they gave me the job, and just said what my duties would be and paid me \$25 dollars a week. That's what I started with. By the time I got home I had \$16 with the taxes and stuff.

Q: Where was WHAT located at that time?

A: 1505 Walnut Street. And I was living at 13th and Wallace, so I could walk to work most of the time.

Q: Did you actually walk from there?

A: Yeah, sometimes I didn't have money to get on the subway. So I'd walk to Broad Street and 1 block over.

Q: How important was the D.J. Willie Bryant in the development of your career?

A: Well Willie Bryant, I used to watch him when I was growing up in New York. He and Ray Carroll. The program was called, "Willie and Ray." Then it was Willie Bryant and Jack Walker was his assistant, Big Fat Jack, a heavy set guy. They used to broadcast from this club, the Baby Grand on 125th Street. I used to go out and watch them, and run errands for them and stuff like that, just to get familiar with being around a radio station. Once in a while I even got a chance to do something or say something on the air. But that's how I got interested in being a disc jockey.

Q: Had you been interested in being a sports reporter before that time?

A: Yeah I wanted to be a sports announcer. When I was at Frederick Douglass Junior High, a sportscaster by the name of Mel Allen*, he's still around, came by and gave us a speech at the school. And I used to listen to him on the radio doing the Yankee broadcast, and that's what I wanted to be. That's how I got interested in that. But they didn't have any black sportscasters. In fact they didn't have hardly any black anything. This was in the 40's.

Q: Prior to the navy?

A: Yeah. Way before the navy. I was just in junior high school.

Q: What about music. Were any members of your family musicians?

Origins

A: No, nobody in the family was musically inclined.

Georgie On Georgia Days

Q: What do you recall about Barnett, Georgia?

A: Cows out here remind me of Barnett. A lot of cows. It was a farm, it wasn't a city. It wasn't a little town. It was a farm!

Q: Was it near Decatur Georgia?

A: It was near Washington, Georgia, and near Macon, 70 miles north of Atlanta.

Q: What kind of work did people do down there?

A: Farm. Sharecroppers. That's what it was.

Q: Your father preached?

A: He was a preacher.

Q: Did he combine the two?

A: He was mostly on the road. You know the Southern preacher is traveling all the time. But my family, my brothers and sisters were the ones who dealt with it.

Q: So there were older brothers and sisters?

A: Yeah, all of them except one. I was next to the youngest.

Q: Out of 9?

A: 11

Q: At what age did you leave Georgia?

A: When I was 9 years old.

Q: Why did you leave?

A: Well there are a number of reasons why we left. First of all there were no jobs. No work. And no schools for anybody to attend. My father wasn't really around, and my mother was trying to raise all 11 of us, and the Klan was very active then. All year we'd work than at the end of the year we never seemed to have anything because we were always in debt with people who had the general store. I remember vaguely when they burned a cross once on our lawn. It wasn't a lawn cause we used to live in a shack, and they (Woods' family) were just totally afraid of that.

An earlier chronicle of Georgie's life put it this way, "The town is gone It's just gone, that's all and now there is no trace of

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

it. It was called Barnett, but all it was, was a speck of dust on the flat broad face of Georgia's corn and cotton. Maybe a super highway came along and ran over it or maybe the sun turned it onto a cinder. Maybe one day the ground opened up and Hell had it for lunch. Anything. All Georgie Woods knows is that his family's sharecropper's shack was near that town, and it is the town he calls home, and now there's nothing left of it but what he holds in his head.

He doesn't like remembering but when he does remember one thing, it is all mixed up in his mind. With fire and screaming and the black night in 1936, but it is there. He is in bed and it is dark and quiet. Then suddenly everything is exploding. Everywhere there are men on horseback and they are white and they are dressed in white. Standing in the dirt in front of the shack is a flaming cross and by its light he can see the frightened faces of his brother and sisters and by its light he can see the form of his mother bent over in a corner, praying. One woman and seven children caught alone in the great emptiness of a Southern plane and all nine year old Georgie Woods can think of is the Klan has come and they will all be dead.

But they did not die. The cross burned out and the Klan rode off and suddenly, just as it had begun they were left all alone in the dark. They had been left with their lives and the clothes on their backs, but every other thing was gone. The cows and hogs and everything else that would move were run off. What wouldn't move, except for the shack was destroyed."

Death and destruction. Matter and mind. An absolute tyranny of peace. How ironic, standing in stark contrast to the destroyed lives was the awesome vegetation and arid land. Older people in Georgia had a strong attachment to the land, the green was so reminiscent of life itself. And yet there was the steelness of a white oligarchy that kept blacks in check. This was the sovereign state of Georgia.

Origins

The Center Of Southern Civilization

Nightfall and they are still there. Young Georgie Woods is locked in this historical place. He had heard the tales, had witnessed the mob violence that engulfed the life beings. What a gulf existed between the races even when they shared virtually the same space. Moving mourning. Georgie's family had already experienced that tyranny of peace, a certain stark desolation. Yet there was hope. All they had was hope and history.

Flashback. We are still on Georgia soil. Palmetto spice. The very air they breathed carried the scent of dead bodies. And yet they continued to breath. It was the middle of March, just a few days before the beginning of spring. *"A mob of more than 100 desperate men, armed with Winchesters and shotguns and pistols and wearing masks rode into Palmetto (Georgia) at 1 o'clock this morning and shot to death four Negro prisoners, desperately wounding another and with deliberate aim fired at four others, wounding two, believing the entire nine had been killed. The boldness of the mob and the desperateness with which the murder was contemplated and executed, has torn the little town with excitement and anxiety."*

All business has been suspended, and the town is under military patrol, and every male inhabitant is armed to the teeth in anticipation of an outbreak which is expected tonight.

Last night nine Negroes were arrested and placed in the warehouse near the depot. The Negroes were charged with the burning of the two business blocks here in February.

At 1 o'clock this morning the mob dashed into town while the people slept.

They rushed to the warehouse in which the nine Negroes were guarded by six white men.

The door was burst open and the guards were ordered to hold up their hands.

Then the mob fired two volleys in the line of trembling, wretched and pleading prisoners and to make sure of their work,

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

placed pistols in the dying men's faces and emptied the chambers.

Citizens who were aroused by the shooting and ran out to investigate the cause were driven to their homes at the point of guns and pistols and then the mob mounted their horses and dashed out of town, back into the woods and home again.

None of the mob was recognized, as their faces were completely concealed by masks. The men did their work orderly and coolly and exhibited a determination seldom equaled under similar circumstances.

The nine Negroes were tied with ropes and were helpless.

The guard was held at the muzzle of guns and threatened with death if a man moved.

Then the firing was deliberately done, volley by volley. The Negroes now dead are: Tip Hudson, Bud Cotton, Ed Wynn, Henry Bingham.

1992 - Cypress Hill... "How I Could Just Kill A Man"

1892 - The peak reason for lynching Blacks.

Fatally shot **and** now dying : John Bigby shot but will recover: John Jameson.

Arm broken: George Tatum

Escaped without injury: Ison Brown, Clem Watts.

The men who were guarding the Negroes are well known and prominent citizens of Palmetto, and were sworn in only yesterday as a special guard for the night.

The commitment trial of the Negroes was set for 9 o'clock this morning.

Bud Cotton, who was killed, had confessed to the burning of the stores in Palmetto, and had implicated all the others who had been arrested.

The military having been sent by Governor Candler arrived at 10:40 o'clock this morning on a special train under command of Colonel John Candler. The Negro population of Palmetto has fled town and it is believed the Negroes are now congregating on the outskirts and will make an assault upon the town tonight.

The place is in the wildest excitement and every citizen is armed, expecting an outbreak as soon as night shall fall.

The Negroes left town in droves early this morning weeping

Origins

and screaming and dogged and revengeful.

Reclaiming all of their past. The above description is relayed to us by a 19th and early 20th century black journalist, Ida B Wells Barnett, in her powerful book, *Lynch Law in Georgia: A Six Weeks Record in the Center of Southern Civilization as Faithfully Chronicled by the Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution*.

Palmetto spice and the power of historical memory more example of Southern civilization in the pre Martin Luther King, Jr. Georgia of the late 19th century. People in and around Palmetto still remembers hearing of one of their great men of the cloth suspended in mid air. Was he asked to sing a song in this strange land.

A Persimmon Tree Holds Negro Preacher

Church services are over. They had been witnesses. Spring has finally arrived and we are closing out an Easter service. In black churches, Jesus hanging on the cross with blood running from his side has special meaning. What a friend we have in Jesus? Pass me not oh gentle savior. Please don't pass me by. Dinner was served in the church yard.

"Sunday night, April 24th, a mob seized a well known preacher, Elijah Strickland, and after savage torture, slowly strangled him to death. The following account of the lynching is taken from the *Atlanta Constitution*. Dateline: Palmetto, Georgia. April 24th (Special).

"The body of Lige Strickland, the Negro who was implicated in the Cranford murder of Sam Hose was found this morning swinging to the limb of a persimmon tree within a mile and a quarter of this place, as told in the *Constitution* extra yesterday. Before death was allowed to end the sufferings of the Negro, his ears were cut off and the small finger of his left hand was severed at the second joint. One of these trophies was in Palmetto today. On the chest of the Negro was a scrap of blood stained paper attached with an ordinary pin..." Lige Strickland (The Rev. Elijah Strickland) was halted directly opposite the telegraph office. The noose was adjusted around his neck and the end of the rope was

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thrown over a tree. Strickland was told he had a chance before dying to confess his complicity in the crime. He replied:

“I have told you all I know, gentlemen. You can kill me if you want, but I know nothing more to tell.”

This was the state of affairs in Georgia when Georgie Woods' father, The Rev. Clinton Woods, was born. He too was a witness.

Origins



Destinies

Memories. Destinies and Decisions. That has been Georgie Woods' life from the moment when his mother decided to leave Georgia. His young mind knew the travails of life. But he had confidence in his mother's vision and trusted, implicitly, her decision to come North. Destinies and decisions.

Decision, Says the Source

Decision Says the Source
links precision
Choose the one to strike
and strike hard.
The nail becomes
Desire. The anvil rings fire
Decision, Says the Source
cleans the inner chambers
of the mind.
Light enters and reveals
confusion
Decision, Says the Source
has two wings of light
one fusion, the other precision

---Henry Dumas

Precision, Destinies and Decisions. And all along there were memories. Specific memories are scarce. Washed along the Hudson River. What is most essential is that segment of the Woods clan escaped.

Georgie and his younger brother, Randolph, reunite. Again it is destiny that brings them face to face. Face to face with their past decisions. Face to face with their own lives. Face to face with their own special sense of history, their own memories. We posed the questions and their respective responses are indicated as follows: G=Georgie, M=Mo [the name Randolph which he has been known by for so many years, speaks in the present. Q=Question.

Destinies

Q: What do you remember most about your mother?

M: She's a sweet woman. She's a spiritual woman. Very spiritual. Home raiser.

G: Brought us all up here. Got us all out of there.

M: That's right she brought us all up here.

G: All by herself.

M: She had stairsteppers.

Q: Do you remember the train ride up here?

M: You better believe it. It was a smokey train.

Q: Where were you sitting, under the heater?

M: I don't know where I was at, but I knew I was dusty as hell.

G: It was a coach. I told you.

M: Back in them days, the coal, the coal...

G: They had to put coal in the engine to move the damn train.

M: It was me, George, Clarence, Billy (he was in a c.c. camp), Irene.

Q: C.C. Camp, is a conservation camp?

M: He (Billy) used to be in conservation camp, my oldest brother. Clinton, named after my daddy. And my baby sister Irene. Clarence was there and George, and me. Then there was Selma, and Velma. That's Irene's two kids.

**A Hand Pulling
Another Hand**

**The Microphone
Helped to Get his thoughts across**



**The kids in the
sun must be reached
by the older hands**

**Almost Like a Weapon and Shield
against evil when he got on it
Nothing could touch him.**

by Charles G. Lee



Harlem...



....after 40 years....

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Q: Did you go back there often?

M: I went there a couple of times afterward. It was still rough when I went back the first couple of times. Prejudiced and all that kind of stuff. Then after the late 50's it started changing.

Q: Have you ever thought about moving back down there, Randolph?

M: I don't know. I've been here so long [Harlem. Uptown. Mo Big Manhattan]. I could manage down there. It wouldn't bother me a bit now. South Carolina, places like that are nice places to go.

Memories. Decisions and Destinies. Places to go and people to see. I could manage down there. That is how Mo sees it. On the other hand, George has no inclination or desire to go back to a place where memories still burn in his mind like the hot sands of North Africa.

Our Destiny

The night will not reply
In its pre-occupation with tomorrow
Living the centuries
not knowing the years.

And we sang our memory
Ritual rags lacquered with blood
In the passion of naked night
Obeying an incarnate instinct
To link the real with the unknown
Multi-form in the universe

---Mbella Sonne Dipoko
(Cameroon, West Africa)

And we sang our memory...Obeying an incarnate instinct.
What else did Georgie Wood's mother have but an incarnate

instinct? Trusting in the lord. Believing always that she could, with God's help, make a way out of no way. That is the history of Black people in the land. And yet their souls are anchored. No matter how dusty the train ride, how bleak the future appeared, Georgie's mother knew that she would have to take that journey. She had to do it all alone. Just her children. George, rightly said, "Brought us all here. Got us all out of there." In order to understand the full implications of Georgie's terse statement you have to travel back in time, to another place, another sense of being in the world. It was the 1930's *Georgia*. A tough state for black people. Oppression was an everyday occurrence, a spiraling destiny for so many of those who stayed there.

A decade before Georgie Woods was born another black man left the state of Georgia. Just as the Woods' family went to New York, the other Georgian, Thomas W. Harvey, went to Philadelphia. He is the generation of Woods' parents, therefore vested with a special memory. "Oh brother. In the South, particularly in the rural sections, all Negro men worked under a contract. Many a man never knew what was in the contract because they couldn't read it. He signed it by making a cross mark. He could break it but the white man couldn't break it. If he kicked all your teeth out and you walked away, you broke the contract. No matter what he did to you, you had to stay there because of the contract. Now, I can remember when you were around May, June, July and especially these big white farmers. If they needed labor there was nowhere to get it from because all the Negroes were under contracts. See? What he used to do, he'd go to the prison and buy them out so they could be his laborers. Those days, when you walk into a little town and you there the first two or three days or so, they won't bother you. But you stay around there a week and you're locked up for vagrancy. If some of those white farmers didn't pay you out, you went to prison...And in so many cases it was hard for the Negro to pay the white man back. You always owed a little bit more. You stayed, a little longer, you know. You always owed a little bit more. I've known many Negroes just walked away. When I first came to Philadelphia in 1918 I met a fellow on South street that I knew at home.. And the time I saw him I knew who he was. I was

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so glad to see him and I walked up to him and said, 'Hello,' his name was Pickney. He looked at me and said, 'I'm afraid you got the wrong fellow.' So I apologized and I looked at him. I said, 'You sure can pass for his twin brother.' And I walked away. He called me, said, 'Hey wait a minute (laughter). He knew I knew him. He started to ask me about his mother.'

Women like Georgie's mother had to encounter a lot to keep their families together. The system of neo-slavocracy, farm tenancy and oppression circumscribed the life chances/options of black men. The disintegration of the black family has its roots in the white oligarchy and peonage of the South. It is amazing to see black families as intact as they are given the multifaceted system of oppression they experienced.

To more fully comprehend what women like Mrs. Woods had to go through we return to Thomas W. Harvey (who became Marcus Garvey's successor as President General of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)). Memories. 'I remember, too, that those crackers in the South, were so determined in getting black women. It was so bad in this particular town that I've known occasions where if they met a Negro man and woman on the street, they would run him away and they would take the woman and use her. One particular place called Wallacoochee. It's between Douglas and Valdosta on the Georgia and Florida Railroad. The Seaboard and Southern. It's a junction there. Wallacoochee was a hard place. If the Negro man was traveling with a woman companion, especially if she was kind of attractive, you know. If he had to stop and change trains there, especially at night, he'd never make it through. If he survived, the next day he'd be in Lackahaw River swamp. They'd grab that woman and use her all night. Wallacoochee was good for that. Everybody who would travel up and down that line knew about Wallacoochee and the things they would do in Wallacoochee. Yeah. And the Negro neighborhood, there crawled around black snakes at night, you know, and they'd catch a woman and force her, you know, have their way with her. I recall my mother was very sick. Practically bed ridden. I had to go into the center of town, at a drugstore, to get a certain kind of medicine for her. On my way back, this

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undertaker shop was right on the corner. I had to go right by it. And at the very back of it there was a kind of a vacant lot like. When I got to the end of the building this white cracker stepped out in front and he said to me, 'Hey nigger. Where you going?' I told him I was going home. 'What you got?' I said, 'I only have medicine for my mother.' He said, 'Look nigger. You go on home and you give your mammy that medicine. And you come back and find me a nigger gal. If you don't, don't you ever let me see you again.' I kept on walking. I went home and I didn't come back. I just went on about my business. I mentioned this to show you how bad things was in the South where a Negro was concerned. You could be sitting down in your home and all of a sudden the door fly open and the town marshals or the police would walk in and start looking in things and patting the women on the backside. You know, just as though you wasn't there. When they got good and ready, they'd walk out. Usually they'd come and see what you're doing. What you're saying or what's going on inside. So there was no regard whatsoever for Negro privacy, his rights as a human being or citizen. That was the last word, citizen. It seem to me, in my mind, if you was a citizen you were entitled to some kind of protection and so on. Just like everybody else. But that wasn't the case in the South. Not for the Negro. No. There was any number of white people who were notorious for killing Negroes. Some of them carried a gun and kept notches cut in the handle of the gun to keep count of the Negroes they killed. You tell some people they will think its a lie but that's the truth. A white man arrested and tried for killing a negro? Oh no! Only one case I remember. Professor Ellis who ran the Negro school in Douglas, he arranged for a fair in the fair ground and ordered all these shows and everything. Of course, the white people came too. Everybody went to it. Country-like, carnival-like things. There was a cracker who lived in that town. He was a notorious rascal but he never had any trouble with Negroes but he used to beat up white folks. When he'd get on one of the drunks. I think what kept him up, he was a professional painter. All of this fine painting and interior decoration. That was his type of work. So one night he got on a spree and he was rolling up cracker lips uptown and beating them up. So they

said that he. . . . Stopped suddenly, he said, 'God. I believe I'll go out to the fair grounds and the first Negro he met he downed him with a 45. Was standing over him with a gun in his hand. I was as close to him as from here across the street.'

We have provided lengthy testimony from one black man who lived to tell the story. There were many who did not. Some stood up to protect their wives and daughters. Their remains are still floating in some river. That is the background to the history of Georgie Woods. It also helps to illuminate the circumstances that gave rise to his mother's hegira (flight). Nearly sixty years later George and his brother look upon their mother's ability to rescue them from the ravages of southern oppression as a victory.

Harlem. New York City. The Big Apple. Ludella Woods and her children arrived in Harlem. 1936. His father, the Rev. Clinton Woods, stayed behind. One *Chicago Defender* headline read, 'There are as many leaving here that Waycross will be desolate soon.'

Emptiness and now full. The tenements of Harlem were jam packed. Migrants came from the deep South and the even deeper Caribbean. It is the Harlem of the 1930's and 1940's. James Baldwin rightly asserted, 'If ever, indeed, the violence which fills Harlem's churches, pool halls and bars erupts outward in a more direct fashion. Harlem and its citizens are likely to vanish in an apocalyptic flood.'

In towns where all the shadows
are in different places and the seasons
of our thoughts have changed, killing
whatever blamed?? before in freedom and love,
men hug blighted night;
night covers their own damage
They dream with torn blankets over their heads.

-Owen Dodson

A train ride and the history of a race. What a difference a train ride meant in the middle of the 1930's. It is 1935. A *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper carried the following article in March

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of 1935. 'An inherent hatred born of the white man's chagrin at finding male ex-slaves finally in a position to partially protect the women of their race against the habitual ravishment to which masters and overseers have subjected them, forms the basis of the sex perversion responsible for Southern lynchings. . .In the case of Claude Neal, a mob of Florida sadists tortured him for twenty-four hours, just as cats torture mice before killing them, castrating their victim, dismembering his genitals and stuffing them into his mouth to compel him to eat his own flesh.'

Black men have experienced hell and beyond in these United States. They move from place to place, hoping to find a place of refuge, a place they can exercise the free rights of a person. Ironically, the very year Georgie's mother moved from Georgia to New York. Terror struck the black community once again. This time it was Royston, Georgia. Dateline, April 28, 1936, "Lint Shaw, burly Negro farmer once saved from lynching through the pleadings of an aged judge was shot to death by a mob of forty men eight hours before he was to have gone to trial on a charge of attempted criminal assault today. His body was found at dawn, tied to a pine tree in a creek bottom near Colbert, Georgia, his home. . .Plow lines, cut? on ropes used for guiding work animals in the fields, were cut up to tie the Negro to the tree." And the story ends as follows, "Several hours after the lynching Shaw was bound to the tree as throngs assembled on the nearby highway. Terrified members of the Negro's family refused to claim the body."

Bucked and scorned and scorned. Tragedy and triumph. It wasn't too long before Ludella Woods and her children were to arrive in Harlem. The long journey North, and the even longer pass South, had ended.

From the bottomless pit of hell, they trekked. As the sunshine reached the sleepy face of young George this particular morning he was in a new space, another place and time. From what George has described as 'a shack' in Barnett, Georgia, this family had relocated to the 6th floor of a housing establishment. They were fulfilling their destinies.



Leandre Jackson Photo

(above and below)

George on the Avenue in North Philadelphia Still the Guy With the Goods



Leandre Jackson Photo



Signing autographs in Upper Darby, PA



Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Flash forward. It is 1992, not 1936. George only recently returned to the place where his childhood was spent. We had spoken with him about returning to the very site, to reconnect, reinvent and resuscitate. Over a month passed before this actually happened. Woods actually returned to his old neighborhood. A week later he was standing in front of a full auditorium of young people at Barrett Junior High School in South Philly. Leaning forward with the microphone in place, Georgie Woods asked, "How many of you in this auditorium feel good about yourself? How many of you in here feel bad about yourself? A young man put a hand up here. Why do you feel bad about yourself? I want to find out. You don't know? He feels bad about himself. Let me tell you something. When you feel good about yourself, everybody else will feel good about you. You may be small. But you are as special, as important, as everyone in this building. So don't you ever feel bad about yourself. You know I don't feel bad about me. I feel good about myself! I'm so proud of me, I don't know what to do sometime! I want you to feel that way. Feel proud of yourself, and whatever it is you want to do, you can do it. The other thing I want to tell you about is a dream and a goal. And don't let anyone tell you that you can't accomplish whatever it is that you want to accomplish. Okay?

Last week I was in New York. I was home in New York. I'm from Harlem. And we're writing a book. I wanted to go back to my childhood, when I was a student like you. I went to every school that I attended in New York, last week. Last Wednesday to be exact. And guess what? Every school that I attended is no longer there. The neighborhood has deteriorated. Every school. One school, Frederick Douglass Junior High School is now a senior citizen's home. My elementary school, they tore it down and they have a tree there. A tree. A small tree, too. My kindergarten is boarded up like these houses I see in the black community. Boarded up. There are boards all around there. We took pictures of that because all of this will be in our book that is coming out soon. The point I'm trying to make is that my childhood memories flashed back to the schools that I attended. You know the only thing that was standing from the period I was in New York is the

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pool room. That's the only thing that was still operating there...But your childhood memories are memories that I hope you'll carry with you. Because I still have all of mine and that was a long time ago. They are still with me. They will be until the day I leave this earth. And here, in this school, in this auditorium, I hope I can say something to you this morning that will make you feel good about yourself, make you feel proud of who you are."

Feeling good about who he is has sustained Georgie Woods over the years. No matter what the challenge, his self-respect and self-confidence enabled him to emerge triumphantly. In addition there were social, spiritual and ethical values passed on to him by a loving and caring mother. He remembers, "the only music we would listen to was gospel. There was no rock and roll around. There was a little bit of jazz we would listen to, but we just came from the South so we listened to gospel. My mother would listen and I would hear it because she listened to it. She was very spiritual. She believed in the hereafter and all of that."

When asked what specific values his mother passed on to him, that remain with him today, George responded, "you have to work. *She gave me working values.* She taught me basic stuff like that. We never went on welfare. That's one thing. She didn't want that. She worked. She was a house cleaning lady, and my sisters were working and my brothers were working. So we didn't get on welfare. We needed it but she didn't want that." She was a mother of pride. He said his mother was ashamed to go on welfare. When asked how he felt about it, George replied, "Well I would not want it. I'd try to avoid it, but I don't think I'd be ashamed if I was in that position." Adding, a wry note to conclude the discussion. George states, "ain't nobody gave me nothing yet. I'm waiting."

Working and waiting!

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

“Behold this maimed and broken thing, dear God; it was an humble black man, who toiled and sweat to save a bit from the pittance paid him. They told him: work and rise. He worked. Did this man sin? Nay, but someone said another did- one whom he had never seen nor known. Yet for this man’s crime this man lieth maimed and murdered, his wife naked to shame, his children to poverty and evil.”

---W.E.B. Dubois

Poverty and evil. Memories. Destinies and decisions. Assigned to a life of poverty and miseducation, black families like Georgie Wood’s, reverse the given order. They survive physical and psychological abuse. They find refuge in the midst of a storm. Bridge over troubled waters. Never entirely alone. “My sisters were all older than the boys, and they had already gone to New York. They were working as domestics. They were able to get enough money to send us some money to get train fare to N.Y.... We had to travel to get a train, cause the train really didn’t stop there [Barnett, Georgia]. They would slow down or something, they’d drop the mail off, but it didn’t really stop. You couldn’t get on. You had to go to, I don’t recall where we got on the train. I think it was Augusta.” George and his four brothers (Randolph, Clinton, Billy and Clarence), joined their mother, Mrs. Ludella Woods. “The girls had already gone to New York.”

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Going to school in New York

The sun hung high over Harlem. And Woods remembers;

Q: Where did you settle once you got to New York.

Woods: We were living at 2774 8th Avenue- 147th and 8th Avenue. And the school that I attended first was around from there- P.S. 90 that's what they call it now.

Q: Were there any teachers there that you think were really helpful?

Woods: Yeah, one of them used to have gray hair. I used to take an apple to her. I used to go back and see her. She was very old, but she died.

Q: What was her name?

Woods: Mrs. Sullivan.

Q: Were all your teachers white at that time?

Woods: Yeah! There were **no** black teachers!

Q: No black teachers at all?

Woods: Not that I ever saw. Back then? No!

Q: What do you remember about Mrs. Sullivan?

Woods: Well she would just keep us after school. Especially me, I was like her pet. And she'd try to show me little things. I just remember her. This was before elementary. Then in elementary school there was Mr. Vitman. I remember him from P.S. 5.

Q: Did he encourage you as well?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Woods: Yeah. He was kind of good. I remember him. I don't remember exactly what he did but I just remember the name. He made an impression on me. I know that.

An earlier chronicler described Georgie's life in the early New York days, "The Woods' arrived in Harlem, Ludella and the children. Father stayed behind. Ludella and the kids stood in front of a tenement house on 147th street and Eighth Avenue, which was to be their new home. The tenement house was in a large street and the Woods lived on the top floor of the tenement, six flights up.

There was always something going on in the neighborhood. In the basement of the tenement house was a speakeasy where beautiful people would tip down the steps and knock on the door and it would open and the people disappear inside. George would look out of the window at night and watch the El go roaring and clattering, with its flickering lights, down to the next station.

In the morning the El would rumble by and awaken young George for another day of concrete and steel. Far from the sunflowers, the corn, the cotton and the warm Georgia sun. Recalls where "I thought coming to the North would be better, but it wasn't because you have to buy everything. We grew everything we ate back home."

Memories, Origins and Destinies long way from home. He began to learn anew. "I remember a bald headed teacher named Hoffman. He was very nice to me and spent a lot of time helping me. Being from the South I was so far behind. After I graduated (P.S. 8) I would always go to him when I had a problem."

As a young child George sought to find out who he was and what he was going to do. As he became a young man in the streets of Harlem, he grew toward an acceptance of his role as an individual in this Republic. Somewhere between his home and school, and the streets of New York, Georgie Woods learned to care not only about himself but others around him. How did his lengthy conversations with his partners, Ronald and Ernest, impact George? What did it mean to have four brothers and four sisters? Did they contribute toward the shaping of his growing consciousness?

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Changes. "When I was in the South they used to play baseball believe it or not. But I got hit with the bat. I was the catcher, and I was too close to the guy swinging and he hit me in the ear and damaged my ear a little bit. So thats when I gave it up."

When asked if he ran ball when he came North, George replied, "No, cause we didn't have any where to play. We didn't have any playgrounds or anything like that."

Home for Georgie was a four bedroom apartment on the 6th floor. He remembers three bedrooms "but we all slept together." Summertime in Harlem "We'd go to the park and go swimming. We had a park there. McComb Park. On 14th street. They had a swimming pool there, a city run pool. We'd go in there and swim. We'd go in the park and play."

His younger brother, Randolph (Mo) describes those days like this, "We couldn't come no further than St. Nicholas back in them days. From down in the valley you got as far as St. Nicholas. To come past that you had to fight those whities! You had a fight *everyday*. Day and night. The white men and them Jews would kick your ass if they caught you out there. Man, we had many battles with them Irishmen. They were tough and some of them Spanish boys." George interrupts. "They'd fight you but then they fought you with their fists. They didn't take no weapons. It's a hell of a beating to get beat with your fist." Mo restarts "But we'd fight with fists. We fought like hell. You had to learn how to fight or you would get your ass kicked. You just got your ass kicked until you learned how to hold them up. That's all."

When Mo was asked what happened when they first came up here, George replied, "They used to kick his ass everyday." Mo, "I aint get my ass kicked too tough *everyday*. I got into a lot of fights. But I'd win most of mine. But I'd run like hell too. Til I could get back at them. Then I'd come back. You bet your life, shit. I'd come back. Stayed in trouble." George echos, "He'd shoot up a whole neighborhood." Mo, "Shoot the covers off them motherfuckers. They had trouble on their hands if they messed with me. Fight to win. I didn't fool around that way." Mo has a hell of a story.

Turning again to Mo, we asked what he remembered most

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

about George. He responded, "Greatest person in the world." Replied, "you just saying that because he's your brother." Mo, "No, I'm telling you like it is." How about as a young kid though. "He minded his business but he wasn't no one to fool around with. Very intelligent. Did you know he was going to go into show business life? "Yeah, he used to be studying his style. I'd be trying to play with the saxophone. Right there at 510 W. 146th Street." At a time when George was thinking about being a sports announcer, like Mel Allen and later a disc jockey, his brother Mo, wanted to play the Jazz saxophone like Illinois Jacquet Arnett Cobb and later Sonny Stilt and John Coltrane. He began boxing around 129th & 7th Avenue. He still remembers the fight he lost at Ridgewood Groove. Not only was he good with his hands, he did woodwork and carpentry. Talking about big Mo, George's brother.

What is it in George Wood's constitutive will that propels him forward? How has he learned to cope with the hardships of life? What has it meant for him to internalize the difficulties that have shaped his life?

In reconstructing Georgie Wood's life story, one is struck by his genuine interest in conveying to young people the importance of getting an education, of going to school. At the same point one detects a sense of personal longing on his behalf. Seldom is it stated as explicitly as it was in a speech he gave to parents from diverse backgrounds assembled at the General David B. Birney School, 9th and Lindley Avenue in Philadelphia, PA. This was Family Night, June 9, 1992. His talk was preceded by Hmong and Cambodian dancers, kindergarten singers (many of them African-Americans), a community church choir, Mrs. Geraldine Gary of the Mayor's Commission on Literacy next and then a recitation (about the Say No To Drugs Club led by Ms. Gail Bullock.)

The auditorium of this school was crowded and it was hot this night. A wide range of ethnics-at-large were there. After all it was Family Night. The choice of Georgie Woods was a good one. Many of the children assembled were familiar with Georgie Woods through the potato chips line that bears his name.

On this particular day we had had an exhaustive interview or

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dialogue. Clearly, memories were encircling over subjects like a vévī. Inside that circle of memory were elements of his past kept locked within.

This was a receptive audience comprised of Blacks, Thais, Hmong, Vietnamese, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Columbians and others. So many of them had come to Philly seeking a better life for themselves and their children as well as their children's children. George recalled his own mother's vision, her search for a better life. He considered his own destiny, his childhood thoughts and still-present memories. Following a great introduction by one of the teachers, Woods moved to the podium to share: "Let me say, first of all, thank you for that great, great introduction. To Ms. Bullock, thank you for those kind words. To the parents, the teachers and all of the students here this evening...this, to me, is an honor. It is an honor not so much for what I'm going to say but what I see here this evening. It is a privilege and an honor to be among you, to be able to say a few words to you, and to witness what I consider to be the best in America right here tonight. This is what America ought to be about...people working together. All different kinds of people working together. I think that is what America ought to be about. I hope you agree.

Since this is family night I guess it would be fitting for me to speak a few words about my family and my life. But first to each parent here tonight and those who are not even here- all this year, every day- I have been visiting school after school giving a message. You know what it is? (To the young people of our city- believe me it has been an honor.) One of the most enjoyable periods of my life has been **this year**. Talking with young people.

There are some things I want to say this evening that I don't normally get a chance to say. Do you see these people with me this evening? They are writing a book about me, my autobiography [sic] and there will be some things in this book that most people in the city of Philadelphia don't know about. Some will be complimentary. Some will not be so complimentary. As a man, we do some things that we are not proud of. And to write an autobiography I kind of think you have to be truthful. That is all that we can deal with- the truth.

As I said before there are some things in the book that might be embarrassing to me and I'm sure you'll be surprised when it comes out. But I want you to remember one thing, **I'M ONLY A MAN**. I'm not God. I'm not a saint. I'm not a preacher. I'm not a teacher. I'm only a man. And that's the way the book will read so don't get mad with me when it comes out. It will be interesting.

I would like to take a few minutes to tell you I came to Philadelphia in 1953. I didn't have the chance that you have to get the education that you can get from this school and other schools. Many of you may not have known this but I did not have the opportunity to graduate from high school. I only went to elementary school in New York City. I would have liked to have been more educated because I don't know where I'd be. Maybe I would be more than just on the radio. Maybe they would have something else named after me other than a bag of potato chips. I don't know.

It wasn't easy because my mother died and left me motherless and fatherless when I was 14 years old. I had to quit school to get a job. Had to go to work. And every since then, except for the time I spent in the Navy during World War II, I have been working. I don't know how much money I have paid in social security. But I've been paying a whole lot. Since I was 14 years old...(Pauses for a moment). My mother died as I said. (Woods resumes the powerful narrative.) When we came from Georgia I was 9 years old or when we got ran out of Georgia, because the oppression that was there was more than my family could bear. We got chased out of Georgia and we went to New York looking for a better life. If any of you in this room are looking for a better life I, can respect you for that. When we got to New York after leaving the farm in Georgia I was 9 years old. A few years later my mother died and I had to go to work.

One of the things that I remember most of all about the death of my mother is that I couldn't go to the funeral. See, I didn't have any clothes to wear to the funeral so I had to watch the hearse take her away. And I couldn't pay her the last respect because I just didn't have anything to wear."

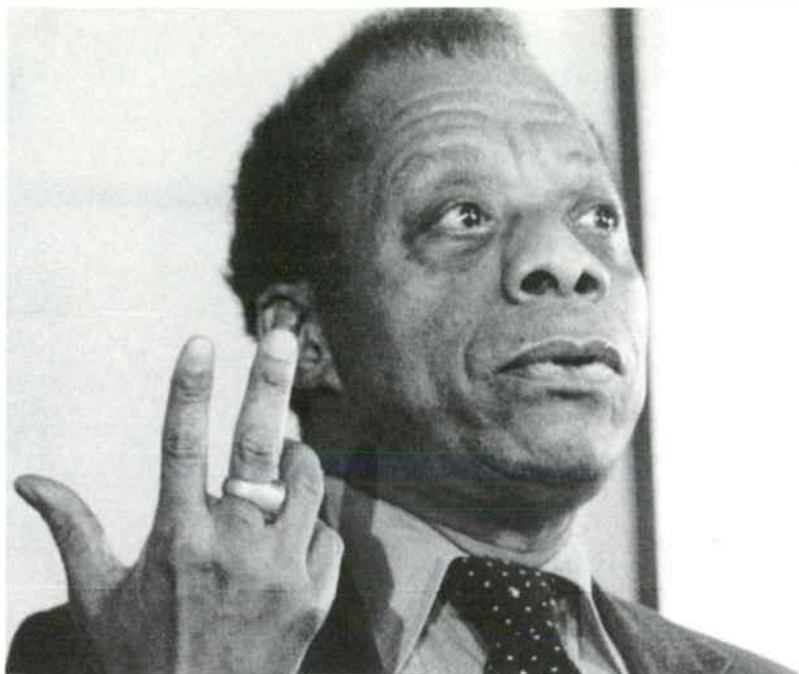
Memories. Destinies and Decisions.



**(above)"This is the hospital my mother died in, many years ago."
(below)Students at Birney Middle School**



James Baldwin



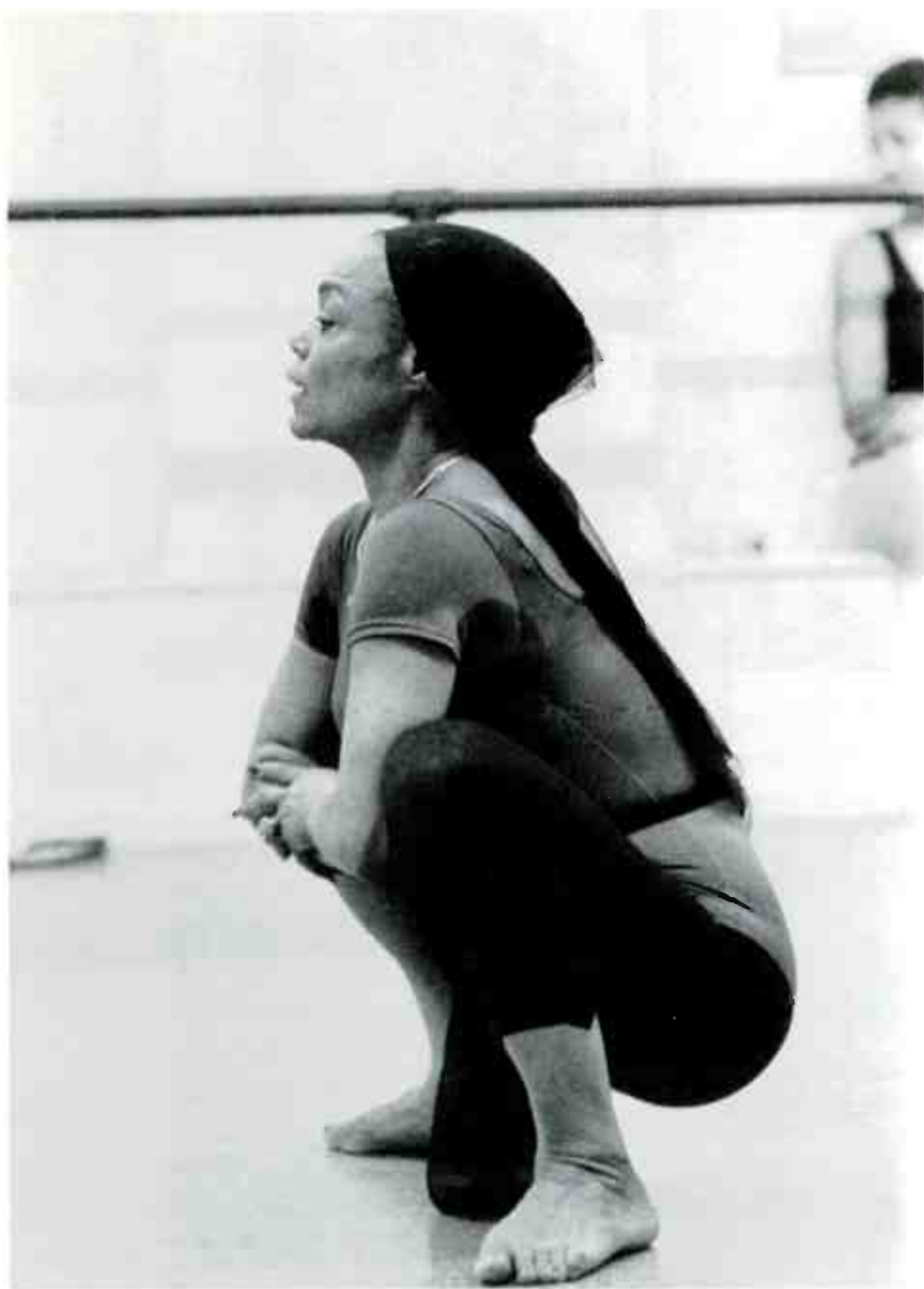
Leandre Jackson Photo

Witnesses



Courtesy George Woods Collection

Georgie



Eartha Kitt

Discoveries

1943

Witness I - Eartha Kitt

“On my way to school one morning all the windows of the stores were shattered. Glass was sprangling the sidewalks, things were scattered helter - skelter from pillar to post. A storm must have hit during the night, I thought, or maybe this is what they told me down South was going to happen: The buildings fall down on top of people and kill them. In wonderment I sat in the class as Mrs. Bishop explained. A white policeman had walked into a bar - Small's Paradise - in Harlem and shot a black man in the stomach, for no apparent reason. The people took to violence. Every store from east side to the west side, from 110th street to 155th street was ransacked. Only those - who had been fair in trade were untouched. Mrs. Bishop had brought a radio from home for us to hear President Roosevelt say ‘I understand the anger, but not the looting.....!’”

-Confessions of A Sex Kitten

Witness II - James Baldwin

“On the 29th of July in 1943, my father died. On the same day, a few hours later, his last child was born. Over a month before this, while all our energies were concentrated in waiting for these events, there had been in Detroit, one of the bloodiest race riots of the century. A few hours after my father's funeral, while he lay in state in the undertakers chapel, a race riot broke out in Harlem. On the morning of the 3rd of August, we drove my father to the graveyard through a wilderness of smashed plate glass.”

. . . Notes of a Native Son

Witness III - Georgie Woods

"I was there. I was somewhere on 145th street. It started at the Braddock Hotel. I was going to the Apollo to see somebody. I didn't know who it was. I was very young and a man named Wilt, who was head of the NAACP, was speaking to the people. A soldier got shot. I was there then, but I didn't get involved with it because I lost all my clothes. I had my suit in the pawn shop.... They broke into the pawn shop and took all the clothes out. Yeah. Zoot Suit. Man, I lost my best shit in the riot.... The stores were all empty the next day and for the next 2 to 3 days we couldn't get any food."

....Page from *I'm Only A Man*

Eartha Kitt, James Baldwin and Georgie Woods all witnessed the Harlem Riot of 1943. Eartha and George were still in school, still searching for their origins and destinies. Baldwin was discovering his, out of school and in the mean streets of Harlem and The Village. Eartha Kitt's mother had sent her to Harlem to live with an aunt. Georgie's mother had brought him to this sacred site and Baldwin was a Native son whose now dead father had been born in New Orleans, Louisiana. They were there as witnesses. Baldwin continues:

"After the funeral, while I was downtown desperately celebrating my birthday, a Negro soldier, in the lobby of Hotel Braddock, got into a fight with a white policeman over a Negro girl. Negro girls and white policemen, in and out of uniform - were part of the furniture of the lobby of the Hotel Braddock and this was certainly not the first time such an incident had occurred. It was, *destined*, however, to receive an unprecedented publicity, for the fight between the policemen with the shooting of the soldier. Rumor, flowing immediately to the streets, outside, stated that the soldier had been shot in the back, an instantaneous and revealing invention, and that the soldier had died protecting a Negro woman. The facts were somewhat different - for example, the soldier had not been shot in the back, and was not dead, and the girl

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

seems to have been as dubious a symbol of womanhood as her white counterpart in Georgia usually is, but no one was interested in the facts. They preferred the invention because this invention expressed and corroborated their hates and fears so perfectly. It is just as well to remember that people are always doing this. Perhaps many of these legends, including Christianity, to which the world clings, began their conquest of the world with just such concerted surrender to distortion. The effect, in Harlem of this particular legend was like the effect of a lit match in a tin of gasoline. The mob gathered before the doors of the Hotel Brad-dock simply began to swell and to spread in every direction, and Harlem exploded...

"It wasn't really a race riot...This was a looting riot. It wasn't blacks against whites. So you can't call it a race riot really. It was just a riot." That is George's recent memory of the 1943 Harlem uprising.

Ironically, Georgie Woods first Harlem is enclosed in race riots. In less than a year after the 1935 Harlem race riot George came to live in that city. Seven years after his arrival and less than a year after the 1943, George had enrolled in the U.S. Navy.

Flashback. Some look back. It is March 19, 1935. Around the same time as the *Baltimore Afro-American* story read, "Lynching Termed A Type of Daire Sex Perversion," and just a few months before the Oxford, Mississippi News: "Ellwood Higginbotham Negro on trial here for the murder of a white man, was taken from the Lafayette county jail last night and lynched by a mob. He was seized while a jury was out deliberating his case." The Scottsboro "Boys" case not far away, lights flashing all around, illuminating the very space they occupied. The great migration carried many to Harlem, and the walls came tumbling down. Spring time is imminent. This is Harlem. Let us survey the landscape or should we say cityscope. Destiny. Origins. Stages. Slow down. Sometimes I rhyme slow. 1935.

Harlem has 21 elementary schools, five junior high schools, one senior high and the very last school built in this sprawling community was erected at 135th street and Edgecombe Avenue in 1925, A full decade prior. Classrooms dark and stuffy, black-

Discoveries

boards old and defective, wooden floors of this school dirty.

The report on Harlem schools issued by Mayor La Guardia's Commission on the Harlem Race Riot noted: "Let us take a look at, perhaps, the worst of these schools, P.S. 89, at the corner of 135th street and Lenox Avenue, which was built in 1889 and had an addition made to it in 1895. This school contains, in an extreme degree, all the bad features of the schools of Harlem. First of all, within a radius of two blocks of the school, there are 18 beer gardens, 6 liquor stores, 4 movie picture houses and 2 hotels alleged to be disreputable, besides one solid block of rooming houses known to be the center of vice and the hideouts of narcotics and other criminals."

Because the schools in Harlem generally did not have adequate recreation facilities, children were forced to play in the streets. It was the only section of the city without a nursery. No program to deal with young children's health problems. The lack of nourishment was responsible for low vitality and made the children susceptible to disease. Malnutrition and tuberculosis threatened the lives of so many Harlem children.

When you consider the values of well being existing for black families of Harlem during the period George's family moved there, it is easy to conclude that the odds were more disposed toward his failure than his success. One of the unique features of so many black families is the absolute fanatical resolve to make it, to be sure that the children go to school, to create life options when there really appears none.

In listening to Georgie Woods recount his personal encounters and the many hardships facing his own family, it is nothing short of astonishing that he surmounted all the challenges and won out. That is a testament to his resolve to make it.

He entered a Harlem torn by a recent rebellion.



(l-r) George, Ray Charles and Matty Singer



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA



Getting The Job Done

Through Time
George Woods Life Scenes
1950's-1980's



Courtesy George Woods Collection



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

World Radio History

Witness IV

Death hiccups like water under the keys
Death is a hurt bird
Death wanes
Death vacillates
Death is an easily - offended patyura
Death expires in a white swamp
of silence.
Swelling of night to the four corners
of the dawn
Somersaults of immobile death
tenacious fate
cries erect on this mute earth
shall not the splendour of this
blood burst forth?

....Aimé Césaire

Return to My Native Land

Periscoping those city scenes. Landmarks of destiny. The bright sun shines in their back door today. Moonlight and the soul surrenders await their own rendezvous with destiny, just as Georgie Woods awaited his own tenacious fate.

When you consider that George's mother, like many black heads of households spent 50%-60% of her income on rent, the scenario becomes even clearer. The black population of Harlem reached 204,630 by 1934. George's brother Randolph said, "When I got to this town here, I thought this was the greatest thing I ever saw in my life. I just didn't want to believe this. I was 5 years old when I got here." Maybe it is only a matter of perspective. Given where the Woods' family came from, Harlem was a way out. For others it was bleak. They had already seen death expire in a white swamp of silence. What else was there to see? These observations and experiences developed in Georgie Woods a resolve of steel that exists to this very day. Man reaches a point in his life where he knows absolutely nothing about the back up.

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Decision, says the source
has two wings of light
one fusion, the other precision.

It was during Georgie Woods first seven years in New York, one might observe, that he learned basic fundamentals of how to survive in an urban metropolis. By the time he became a teenager, he had spent sufficient time in the street to be conversant with 'living just enough for the city!'

Those first seven years (1936-1943) were pivotal in his development. Coming to New York in a post depression to depression period and remaining there through World War II, enabled George to witness the very origin of modern urban blight that now engulfs city after city in the U.S.A.. What many who came North like Woods' family did not realize was that many of the conditions that prevailed in the South were also evident in N.Y. Is it not reasonable to assume that part of the baggage they brought North was their special memory? The following incidents during the 1935 race riots help illuminate things: "At about 2:30 in the afternoon of March 19, 1938, Limo Rivera, a 16 year old colored boy, stole a knife from a counter in the rear of E.H. Kress & Company on 125th street. He was seen by the manager of the store, Jackson Smith, and an assistant, Charles Hurley, who were on the balcony at the time. Mr. Hurley and another employee overtook the boy before he was able to make his escape through the front door. When the two men took the knife from Rivera's pocket and threatened him with punishment, the boy in his fright tried to cling to a pillar and bit the hands of his captors." This led to back and forth motion. The presence of an ambulance and later a hearse only contributed to the spread of a rumor that a young black boy had been killed by a white officer. According to the Riot Commission report: "A hearse which was usually kept in a garage opposite the store on 124th street was parked in front of the store entrance while the driver entered the store to see his brother-in-law. The rumor of the death of the boy, which became now to the aroused Negro shoppers an established fact, awakened the deep-seated sense of wrongs and denials and even memories of injustices in

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

the South. One woman was heard to cry out that the treatment was "just like down South where they lynched us! The deep sense of wrong expressed in this remark was echoed in the rising resentment which turned the hundred or more shoppers into an indignant crowd."

A study of this urban racial rebellion of 1938 and subsequent ones reveal a strikingly similar pattern. The report continues, "From its inception, as we have pointed out, the out break was a spontaneous and unprecedented action on the part, first of women shoppers in Kress Store and later of the crowds on 125th street that had been formed as the result of the rumor of a boy's death in the store, as the fever of excitement based upon this rumor spread to other sections of the community, other crowds formed by many unemployed standing about the streets and other onlookers sprang up spontaneously. At no time does it seem that these crowds were under the desertion of any single individual or that they acted as part of a conspiracy against law and order. The very susceptibility which the people in the showed towards the rumor, which was more or less vague, depending upon the circumstances under which it was communicated....was due to the feeling of insecurity provided by years of unemployment and deep seated resentment against the many forms of discrimination which they had suffered as a racial minority."

Although Georgie Woods had not yet arrived in Harlem at the time of the March 19, 1935, racial upheaval, he arrived in time to experience the hardships that led to the so-called Harlem Race Riot of 1943. The latter uprising did far more damage and because of when it occurred (World War II) had far greater implications.

It was August 8, 1943, a black soldier, his mother and his lady were leaving the lobby of the Braddock Hotel at the corner of 125th Street and Eighth Ave, (a block away from the Apollo Theatre and across the street from the *Amsterdam News*). Difficulty occurred between the hotel clerk and a Black woman. A white policeman's behavior in taking charge of the woman brought this comment from the soldier-still in uniform-"You wouldn't do that to one of your group." An altercation took place between the soldier and the police resulting in the soldier getting hold of the

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officer's night stick. He struck the police officer who drew his gun and shot the soldier in the shoulder.

Street Rumor: "A colored soldier has been killed by a white cop in the Braddock Hotel. He was shot in the back while his mother looked on."

It wasn't long before crowds gathered in front of the Braddock Hotel, the 123rd street police station between 7th and 8th Avenue and the Sydenham Hospital at 123rd street and St. Nicholas Avenue. By 1:17 A.M. on August 2, 1943, the first bottles were thrown. Plate glass window smashed. Night found the Harlem streets full from 112th street to 145th and the geographical over from Lenox to Eighth Avenue. The very site where Georgie Woods first moved in Harlem, was located along the rebellious crowds' thoroughfare.

The Braddock Hotel in Harlem was the site of an absolute tyranny of place. It had been the lodging place for so many black entertainers in bygone years, one of the few decent places for a black man to lay his head. Only a few years earlier the agricultural scientist, George Washington Carver had been refused service at a downtown New York hotel.

Destinies. Discoveries. Decisions. Consider the source.

Bloods moved through the streets of Harlem like the A train conducted by Sun Ra. Space bloods exercising new options. One woman bragged, "I've got enough fur coats to last me the rest of my life." Slowly they moved. Treasure seeking in the dark of night and amidst the wreckage. Summertime and the living is hard. Not Gershwin. Concrete disorder. A white shop keeper remarked, "They have pent-up hatred and the first thing you know, anything happens. I don't think the Braddock Hotel was important. Any incident would have set it off."

White policeman commented, "Looting is just a national instinct. They don't know better. They're just like savages. Don't belong in a civilized country in my estimation...belong back in a tree...only thing missing is a tail."

Black taxi driver explains: "The colored people are just mad. My daughter, she's been to college and can't get a job but at \$1200. My son-in-law, discriminated and mistreated."

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

What is the emotional 'precondition' for such an urban racist rebellion?

World War II and the burden of democracy in a white oligarchic space.

What led to this war within a war zone?

- The mistreatment of black soldiers.
- Landlord exploitation.
- Poor housing.
- Lack of adequate recreational facilities
- Merchant exploitation
- Mistreated from the Isles of the Pacific to Camp Stewart, Georgia
- Riots rocked the cities of Beaumont, Texas, Detroit, Michigan, Chester, PA, Mobile, Alabama and soon to be Philadelphia, PA.

Seven to one. That was the stakes. But blacks were still in the game, at land and at sea.

A black business man in Harlem argued that the policemen were more interested in graft than in enforcing the law. He felt that the only people protected in the streets of Harlem were criminals and hoodlums.

Insecurity. Fear. Frustration and resentment engulfed this community. Some began to realize that it was more important to drain the swamp than it was to treat each case of malaria as it appears.

Going In The Navy

These were the conditions that prevailed in Harlem at the time George decided to go into the Navy. George explains just what was happening in his life at the time he decided to seek new opportunities in a racially circumscribed place.

Q: Why did you decide to go into the Navy?

Woods: All my brothers had gone in. It wasn't easy to get a job. It was a thing where you had the war type mentality, and I wanted

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to be a man like everybody else.

Q: Where you gung ho about fighting?

George: No, I wasn't really into that. *It was a way to eat.* It was a job. You could say you travelled. See the world. They put the signs up, the girls and all that stuff. I said I can go in the Navy and see the world. That's what I did. At my age my sister signed for me.

Q: Was your sister like your guardian?

Woods: Yeah.

Q: Your mother had died by this time?

Woods: My mother had died.

Q: Where did you live after that?

Woods: I moved in with one of my sisters.

Q: What was her name?

Woods: Peola. We were all split up. My oldest sister had my youngest brother. So we were living in different places. When the sister I was living with got married, I had to move on my own.

Q: Where did you move then?

Woods: I moved to 123rd and 7th Avenue. I had a room there with some ladies.

Q: Was it difficult to get that place?

Woods: No it was only \$2 dollars a week rent.

Q: Was this the West Indian lady?

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Woods: No, this was before that.

Q: So you just walked through Harlem to find a room?

Woods: No. You'd go somewhere where somebody knew the people. My sister knew them so she recommended me. So they would charge \$2 dollars a week which wasn't bad. You could shine shoes and try to get \$2 dollars to pay the rent.

Q: Did you shine shoes up near the Apollo Theatre?

Woods: No, I never shined shoes there. I delivered papers. *The Sunday Daily News*. You could get 3 cents per paper then. So I used to do that. Most of the time I got robbed.

Q: What do you mean you got robbed?

Woods: Well the big guys would just rob you when you sold newspapers. Then I would shine shoes on Sunday in front of the church. I think it was a nickel to shine shoes. I used to hustle pretty good.

Q: Do you remember your first show you saw at the Apollo?

Woods: I really didn't go to the Apollo that much. Downtown is where we went.

Q: Where downtown did you go?

Woods: The Paramount.

Q: What shows were down there?

Woods: Frank Sinatra used to play down there.

Q: Were you a Sinatra fan?

Woods: No, but I went there. I liked Sonny Stitt and people like

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that. But they didn't have shows like we have now, or like we used to have. They started in the late 50's. They had variety shows, with dancers and comedians and that type thing. I didn't go for that.

Q: Who did you see doing a show the way you later began doing it?

Woods: No one was doing it then. We started it. It wasn't really a disc jockey thing. Willie Bryant used to do a show called the 'Children's Hour' or something like that, and he had a show at the Apollo, but it wasn't anything where he had popular artists appearing on it. They would dance and sing and tap dancers and that kind of stuff. I went to see Sinatra at the Paramount.

Q: Did you hear Count Basie?

Woods: Yeah, cause once in a while he'd play downtown, and he'd play at the Apollo. I'd seen him down at the Capitol Theatre a long time ago.

Q: How about Louis Jordan?

Woods: No, I never saw him. He was good then. He played the Apollo and places like that. It was a different kind of show. They had comedians and tap dancers and all kinds of stuff.

Q: Did they have matinees at that time period?

Woods: They had matinees. They were shows that appealed basically to the older people. Once in a while they'd do jazz. We were mostly into jazz at that time.

Q: That was the Bebop period?

Woods: Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Stitt, Charlie Parker, that's who we were listening to.

It was the 1940's. The Age of Bopping. Charlie Parker, Dizzy

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Gillespie, Nelson Boyd, Kenny Clarke and others created the maximum music for the outsiders, those who knew the value of walking on the wild side. What is important to understand it that Georgie Woods came to maturity the same period as Malcolm X did in the streets of Harlem. It was an era when BeBop music represented the aesthetic choice of so many in his generation. Cold. Cold. Heart. He remembers hearing Dinah Washington even when she was a vocalist with the Lionel Hampton Band (1943-1945). Woods recalled, "Dinah Washington had a big influence on me. I liked her." This is long before she sang 'This Bitter Earth,' 'A Rocking Good Way,' and 'What A Difference A Day Makes.'

Witness V: Justice Thurgood Marshall

One day George was walking around Harlem, hanging out at the poolroom. The next day he was in the U.S. Navy. We are talking about a different era in American History. In order to gain a greater sense of the climate at that time let us turn to a recent speech by Former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Racial memory and the history of a people. Justice Marshall made these comments on July 4, 1992, at Independence Square in Philadelphia upon receiving the coveted gold Liberty Medal. "I would bear in mind that as late as through World War II the Southern influence in government insisted on maintaining rigid segregation in the armed forces even if it meant losing the war. They considered segregation more important. I think it is high time that the Negro and other people in this country who believe in right, Say, 'You either pass civil rights or all right, let's slow the country down!'" Voice of an octogenarian witness.

Navy Black

Prior to Georgie Woods going into the Navy, black civilians led the fight to break down the walls of segregation that prohibited blacks from becoming full participants in the war effort. What

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was the basis for the outcry relative to the mistreatment of blacks in the U.S. Navy? Six reasons were offered:

- The navy was making little use of Negro seamen, except as stewards on sea-going ships.
- Men trained at the naval schools were assigned to menial laboring jobs in shore depots, and in some cases under civilian direction.
- There were no commissioned officers; petty officer ratings were being withheld from Negroes. There were no Negro chaplains, and only two Negroes had been accepted for training as commissioned medical officers in the Naval Reserve.
- No Negroes were in attendance at the Naval Academy.
- No Negroes had been admitted to the Naval Aviation branch except as ground service men and mess attendants at aviation shore establishments.
- Negro trained seamen and service school graduates were not permitted to work at their specialties, but were assigned for the most part to ammunition and supply depots as stevedores.

Georgie Woods and other black Navy men were beneficiaries of the protracted struggle to convince the U.S. Armed Forces to practice democracy in their fight for four freedoms. Lt. Dennis D. Nelson U.S.N. illuminates conditions in his highly informative work, *"The Integration of The Negro Into The U.S. Navy"*. Nelson states, "Early in 1942, the Navy began to accept qualified Negroes for general service ratings. In September 1942, Negro service schools were opened at Great Lakes and Hampton Institute. In February 1943, volunteering was terminated and the navy began to receive its personnel from selective service. It was at this point that a tremendous increase in Negro personnel started to place a strain on the navy's facilities and on the navy's policy of segregation."

Since white navy personnel did not know how to administer blacks in responsible positions the U.S. Navy issued the following directive: ALNAV 7 AUGUST 1944

ADMINISTRATION OF NEGRO PERSONNEL

"To obtain the best results in the utilization of Negro personnel, intelligent leadership, including active interest in the welfare

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of subordinates and realistically sympathetic understanding of the problems of Negro sailors must be stressed.

In recognition of widespread uncertainties and misconceptions concerning the supervision of Negro personnel the Bureau had set up indoctrinal training programs to better prepare officers for this type of duty. The shore establishments have had the opportunity to send officers to this specialized training, and in addition the Bureau has endeavored to assign officers with the desired background and training to activities having large numbers of Negroes. Indoctrinal training will be continued and is available to officers nominated by all interested commands.

Nevertheless, incidents have come to the attention of the Bureau which indicate that in some cases officers assign duties in connection with the supervision of Negro personnel because of poor leadership ability, lack of understanding of the problem, or for other reasons, are not suited to this type of work. Continued wider participation of Negroes in naval activities, both ashore and afloat, makes it increasingly necessary that close attention be given to the type of supervision they have.

It is expected of each officer assigned to the command of Negro personnel that personal attitudes inimical to the best interest of the Naval service be completely suppressed. However, it is recognized that certain officers will be temperamentally better suited for each command than others. Accordingly it is directed, that all commands give close attention to the proper selection of such officers and to the constant review of their qualifications for this program."

By the time Georgie Woods went into the U.S. Navy, things were relatively better for blacks. The year following his mother's death had left him virtually without familial support. It was a challenge just to keep food, clothing and shelter together. But he managed. "Well you know, all my brothers were in the Army. The Navy appealed to me because they said if you joined the Navy you could travel and see the world, meet a girl with a grass skirt. You know bullshit like that. Plus it was a way of getting out of the ghetto. That was my escape. It was nothing in the streets of New York. I couldn't get a job in New York. The Navy was a way of

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surviving.”

In order to survive, in or out of the Navy you had to have certain skills, at that time there were two schools for blacks seeking specialized training: Camp Robert Smalls (Great Lakes, Illinois - The Chicago Area / and Hampton Institute Virginia). In Woods' case he did his basic training at Camp Robert Smalls. It was a school for gunners, radiomen, quartermasters, signalmen, yeoman, storekeepers, cooks, and bakers. By September 1943, blacks could participate in shore patrol training and by February 1944, they opened separate facilities to train blacks as aviation metalsmiths and gunner's mates. The main area of the Service School Command at Great Lakes was close to “Negro service schools” at Camp Smalls.

Dennis Nelson in *The Integration of The Negro Into The U.S. Navy*, informs us, “The Navy's monthly quota of Negroes mounted quickly from 2,700 to 5,000, then to 7,350 and finally to 12,000. As the influx of Negro selecties increased, the Navy soon discovered that it could not find employment for all of them in shore installations. It also discovered that this complete cross section of the Negro community included a large number of men possessing technical skills lost to the Navy “and therefore to the war effort” under a policy that prevented the assignment of Negroes to the fleet. In the meantime, segregation continued to be in effect.”

Full effect. Sometime they rhyme slow. Who's the Black Sheep? Who's the Black Sheep. Puppets of chaos. But this was the Navy Black in the 1940's.

The *Crisis* Magazine (Official organ of the NAACP) of 1940 offered the following critique of the Navy's partisan attitude toward blacks: “Our taxes help keep up the Naval Academy Annapolis where our boys may not attend. They helped to maintain the numerous naval bases, navy yards, and naval air bases from which we are excluded. Of the great sums that go for wages and salaries we get but a few pennies. The training in numerous trades and skills which thousands of whites received and used in civilian life is not for us! The health care, the character building, the training in efficiency, the travel and education - all at the expense of the tax payers - are for white only!

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

This is the price we pay for being classified as a race, as mess attendance only! At the same time we are supposed to be able to appreciate what our white fellow citizens declare to be the vast difference between American democracy and Hilterism."

A false churl and a false justice?

Memories. Destinies. Origins. For such a day as this.

Let my children
rise
in the path
of the morning
up and go forth
on the road
of the morning
run through the fields
in the sun
of the morning
see the rainbow
of Heaven:
God's curved
mourning
calling.

A false justice and a false churl?

During, before and after the period Georgie Woods served in the U.S. Navy, that branch of the combined armed forces, like others, considered blacks to be less than human. This was manifested in so many ways. George Woods tells a story about one such experience. It reveals George in a pre-nation conscious state. Like the Hip Hop contingent - 'The Geto Boys' - He may have thought that his mind was playing tricks on him. Remember he was only 16 years when he went into the Navy.

Q: What did that two year period in the Navy do to heighten your consciousness?

Woods: Well, we were coming out of Virginia and the bus stopped to eat. But they wouldn't serve the black guys. And we had to go around the back part to eat. We were all in the Navy together. They

Discoveries

tore the place up.

Q: Who did?

Woods: All of us. We were sailors together black and white.

Q: Both blacks and whites fought the restaurant.

Woods: Yeah. They said if they [blacks] cant eat in here, nobody's gonna eat here. Thats what happen. Somewhere over in Virginia just before we got into Washington.

Q: In other words you were leaving the Williamsburg - Hampton - Norfolk are going into DC.

Woods: All the guys stationed there from N. Y. had to go the same way.

Q: And you were on your way...

Woods: We were on our way home.

Q: And you stopped in the restaurant...

Woods: Yeah. We stopped to get a hamburger or hot dog. Some shit like that. And that's the first time that I realized...I didn't really realize anything. I was young then. I didn't realize anything. It didn't mean anything to me. It was just an incident that happened. Later it became signifigant, as I got older.

Q: So by the time that the sit-ins began a decade or more later did you think of it?

Woods: I thought about it but it didn't occur to me that it was discrimination. I didn't think about it.

Q: When did it occur to you that it might be discrimination? How

long after the time it happen?

Woods: Well, it took a while. It was just an incident that made me start reading about different denials that were being perpetrated against blacks.

Q: Did people talk about discrimination much while in the Navy?

Woods: No. They didn't.

Q: Why?

Woods: It just never came up. During the war it didn't come up, cause they were all together. Like in World War I, if you were in the service you knew you were in the service. And that's the way that was. We knew that all the blacks got all the worst assignments and all of the shit jobs. But we just didn't care. That was the way it was.

Mutiny and Riots

There were some black men in the Navy who just wouldn't stand for things being the way they were. A hunger strike was staged by nineteen seamen who actively fought against discriminatory practices. Throughout the whole war period, disorders occurred. Every effort was made to keep the lid on. Despite these efforts Dennis D. Nelson, Lt. U.S.N., writes: "These disorders, tantamount to mutiny and riot, were disturbances in which negro naval personell on the Island of Guam claim they suffered frequent unprovoked annoyances and assaults by white marines bases on the island, beginning the summer of 1944 and reaching a climax with an unsuccessful venture at retaliation by a group of negro sailers on christmas night on the same year. [This is before Charlie Broom's christmas songs]. Negro personnel considered work conditions untenable, for although this was an active theater of war only whites were armed during work hours in danger zones.

They also complained of lack of reasonable promotions and the failure to place class 'A' school graduates in fields for which they were trained. Added to these conditions were the numerous instances of violence suffered at the hands of white marines, who objected to the attention shown native girls in the village of Agama and about the island by negro personnel of the base."

Brothers working their usual magic.

Nelson continues, "Forty five negro navy men had been convicted by court marshal and given stiff sentences ranging from four months to four years for participating in the uprising." Similar to the Georgia justice Woods' progenitors knew so many moons ago. How many seasons asked Ayo Kuré Armah?

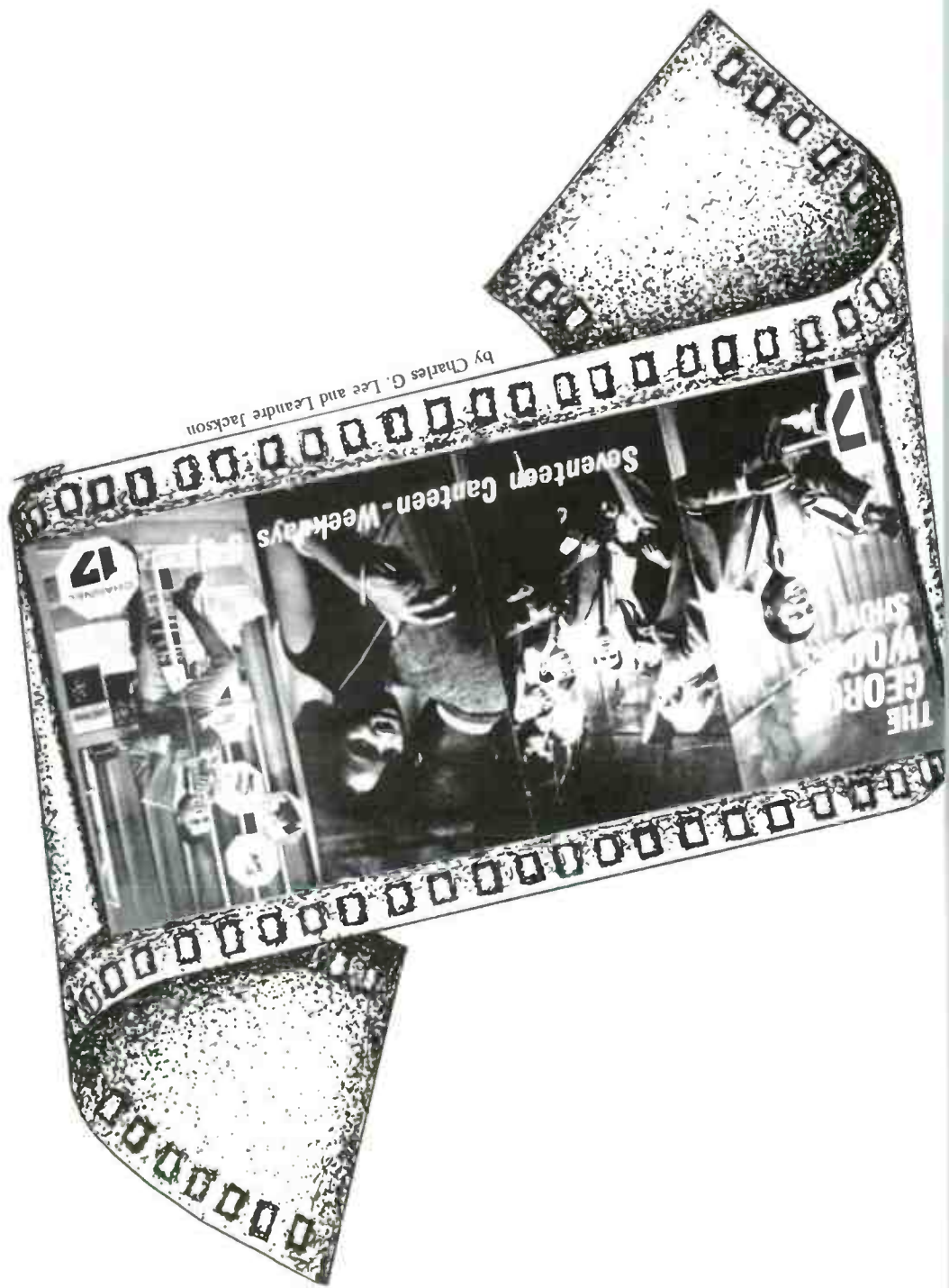
Again Nelson informs us of the Navy black experiences, "Rumor had it that a negro sailor had been killed and another shot by a white marine on Christmas day. That brought matters to a head, and Christmas night after forty Negro Navy men left the depot without permission in three commandeered military vehicles, presumably to wreak vengeance upon the Marine Corps Military police who found arms and ammunition in the unauthorized vehicles."

Perhaps three of the most noted incidents involving Blacks and the U.S. Navy were:

- The Seabee's Discharge Case of the 80th Battalion in October, 1943.
- The Port Chicago Mutiny at San Francisco, July 7, 1944.
- The Guam Disorders, December 25, 1944.
- The Seabee Hunger Strike at Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California, March 1945. It was staged by Black Seaman in mass protest against discriminatory practices and the lack of promotions.

The Post Chicago Mutiny

The incident that has received the most sustained and detailed scholarly attention has been the Port Chicago Mutiny. The recent publication of Robert L. Allen's book, *The Port Chicago Mutiny*. His graphic description takes us to the scene. "The fateful,





**Georgie presenting a check to NAACP executive officer Gertrude Barnes
and Hopson Reynolds, Grand Exalted ruler of the Elks**

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

moonless night of Monday, July 17, 1944, was clear and cool. A slight breeze was blowing from the Southwest. Two cargo ships were tied up at the Port Chicago pier, and under floodlights work was preceeding at full speed.

Tied to the inboard, landward side of the pier facing downstream was the *E.A. Bryan*. Taking on explosives night and day, the *Bryan* had been moved to Port Chicago for four days. Ninety-eight men of Division Three were hard at work loading the ship, and by ten o'clock that night the ship was loaded with some 4,600 tons of ammunition and high explosives. Disaster struck about 10:17 p.m.

Witness VI- Cyril Sheppard

"I was sitting on the toilet- I was reading a letter from home: Suddenly there were two explosions. The first one knocked me clean off...I found myself toward the wall...Men were screaming, the lights went out and glass was flying all over the place. I got out to the door...That thing bad...the whole building was turned around, caving in. We were a mile and a half away from the ships. And so the first that came to my mind, I said, 'Jesus Christ', the Japs have hit."

Witness VII- Joe Small (Lying In His Bunk)

"I didn't know what the first one was- and the second one just disintegrated the barrocks. It picked me up off the bunk- I was holding on to my- mattress- and flipped me over. I hit the floor with the mattress on top of me. That's why I escaped injury. The glass and debris that fell hit the mattress rather than me. I got one minor cut.

Other fellows were cut and bleeding all over the place. I helped some of the men that were injured. One fellow's feet were bleeding and I gave him my shoes. Another fellow had a cut all the way down his arm, and I put a touriquet on it to try to stop the bleeding. There were no medics around; it was chaos."

Discoveries

Fast fly the faces through our blood years
faces fly by the widows of the moon
and pass the sons of the slave's kneeling
in the shores of home.
time in their faces, stops, and the dancer
is stilled by the chained seat whose sounds
bring in memories out of our private and collective past
---Larry Neal

Behold Your Hour Has Come!

Flying glass and debris. Anarchy and Christianity.
“I was with you every day in the temple, you did not lift a hand against me. But now you have come out with swords as against a brigand! Behold Your Hour Has Come, and the power of darkness.” (Luke 22:52-53) Black seamen had to reconcile two positions: the interests of the state and their own interest as blacks.

Witness V- Thurgood Marshall

Following the Treasury Island Mutiny trial, Thurgood Marshall, lead counsel on behalf of the NAACP investigation said, “The men actually don't know what happened. Had they been given a direct and specific order to load ammunition and they had refused to obey that order then the charge would be legitimate. But they say no direct order to load was issued them.” Further he stated, “I want to know why the Navy disregarded official warnings by the San Francisco waterfront unions- before the Port Chicago disaster- that an explosion was inevitable if they persisted in using untrained seamen in the load of ammunition. I want to know why the Navy disregarded an offer by these same unions to send experienced men to train Navy personnel in the safe handling of explosives...I want to know why the commissioned officers at Port Chicago were allowed to race their men. I want to know why bets ranging from \$5 up were made between division officers as to whose crew would load more ammunition.”

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Atty. Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP of that period did a yeoman service to the Navy Black. And yet we are faced with the awesome historical fact that the Port Chicago Mutiny claimed a considerable percentage of the overall black naval casualties in WWII.

Robert Allen provides the following startling summary, “The *E.A. Bryan* was literally blown to bits- very little of its wreckage was ever found that could be identified. The *Quinalt Victory* was lifted clear out of the water by the blast, turned around and broken into pieces. The stern of the ship smashed back into the water upside down some five hundred feet from where it had originally been moored. The Coast Guard fire hanger was blown two hundred yards upriver and sunk. The locomotive and boxcars disintegrated into hot fragments flying through the air. The 1,200 foot long wooden pier simply disappeared.

Everyone on the pier and aboard the two ships and the fire barge was killed instantly- 320 men, 202 of whom were black enlisted men. (Only 51 bodies sufficiently intact to be identified were ever recorded.) Another 390 military personnel and civilians were injured, including 233 black enlisted men. This single stunning disaster accounted for more than 15 percent of all black naval casualties during the war.”

Faced with a war of uncertain length requiring prolonged service, Georgie Woods and his peers did contribute much. Beginning at Camp Robert Smalls in the Chicago, Illinois area Woods saw action at Eniwetok, Guam, Saipan, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and the Phillipines.

Woods and James Brown's Father in Okinawa

Woods relates an incident that sheds light on some of his experiences in the U.S. Navy. “We were in the war. We were in Okinawa having an air raid. It was very light because of the moon. It looked almost like it was day time and we didn't have no real bathroom. You had to dig a hole and shit in the hole. That was the

Discoveries

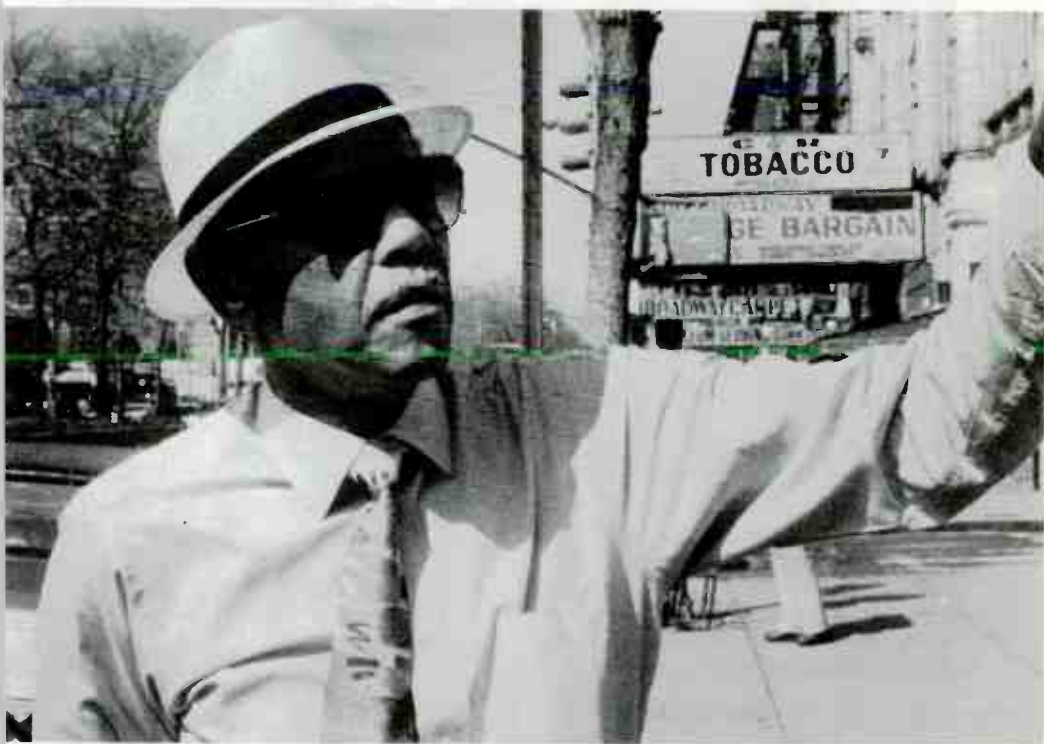
bathroom all troops had to use. When you'd get ready to cover it up you had to take the top off and let it air out otherwise the stink would come up out the ground. So that particular night they were going to cover it up because it was full, and we had this air raid, and the thing about it was you couldn't tell the difference between the shit and the fox hole. So the siren goes off and everybody's scrambling trying to get to a fox hole. Everybody is jumping in these holes and James Brown's father went in the wrong hole. Yes, he did. And at about 4 o'clock that morning we heard way in the distance, 'Help'. So we thought it was a Jap, cause they used to use that ploy to get you out in the open, and finally we got to this shit hole, and we threw him a rope and he was way down in there. And man we didn't have no water. He couldn't take a bath, and he slept in the same bunk with me. And his hair was all full with shit and his eyebrows. They put him on a jeep and took him down to Browns Beach and took him down to the ocean and threw him in the ocean 'cause he stunk. To get that stuff off. It gets hot, and all that salt water and shit dried up on him. You're talking about smelling bad, and we just laughed about that. Ten years later, I had James Brown at the Uptown. He said, "Mr. Woods I want you to meet my father." Joe Brown walks in. He looked at me, I looked at him. And he started laughing. We both just broke out laughing. I mean, I laughed. James didn't know what was going on. So Joe explained to him what happened in the shit hole instead of the fox hole, and everytime I see him (he's been sick recently), he starts laughing. James turned out to be flaky, too. I bought James Brown his first suit. He had overalls on. He had them little winter/summertime clothes, and it was winter time so I took him to Leighton's in New York and bought him his first suit. If you ever talk to him he'll say I bought him his first suit."

Thus we see the origins of James Brown's funk is inextricably tied to a familial line. Ain't it Funky now?

Reflecting on his naval experiences many years later, Georgie Woods provides the following insight.

Q: What did the Navy teach you about leadership?

Discovery



Jackson Photo



Woods joins James Brown in black ritual at the Uptown Theatre

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Woods: You have to follow. Everybody can't be the leader. Everybody can't be the captain of the ship.

Q: What were your responsibilities in the Navy?

Woods: I was a gunner. I was a gunner's mate second class. We had the big 16 inch guns. I had a couple of guys under me. I was shore patrol.

Q: You were a young guy doing that?

Woods: Yeah, but I was good. I could break down the guns.

Q: So the Navy experience was a bridge for you?

Woods: It was a way of surviving. I couldn't get a job in New York.

On The Battlefield

Q: Did you have much contact with the Japanese?

Woods: Well, I didn't have too much contact. But when I was in Okinawa...that was the closest contact we had. But it wasn't one on one. You never knew...because you never knew who you were shooting.

Q: So you would shoot everything that was in front of you, whatever moved?

Woods: We were like logistics. We handled equipment. We had a lot of materials. That's what our role was."

The supply of combatant forces is a major problem of vital importance at sea, as it is at land. There were two crucial requirements: the moving of supplies into advanced shore bases and the supply of ships while at sea. Working in naval logistics enabled George to develop a clarity of vision regarding the opponent. He

Discoveries

also learned the value of teamwork, an asset that has served him remarkably well over the last 50 years. "We would take these little boats in, and they'd jump off and run into whatever island they were going... You didn't work, no hours, it was 24 hours. You didn't have a shift, you slept when you could.

Destinies. Memories. Origins. Distance. Even though Georgie Woods' naval experiences took place many years ago, they remain as large as the base at Leyte-Samar. From Treasure Island to Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands, 750 miles from Tokyo. There are memories. Palace landings, General McArthur's commands, ship wrecked at Mindano, isolation of Japanese forces on Halmahera. Pre D-Day and the history of a race at sea. Seafaring people from West Africa to Pelshin Island. So much history. "Some people got injured. I don't know. That's a part that I don't like to think about. That's one part of my life I really just push aside."

And what about Dorie Miller, George?

"Well, he was like a hero. Everybody remembers him. He was the one who shot down the planes.

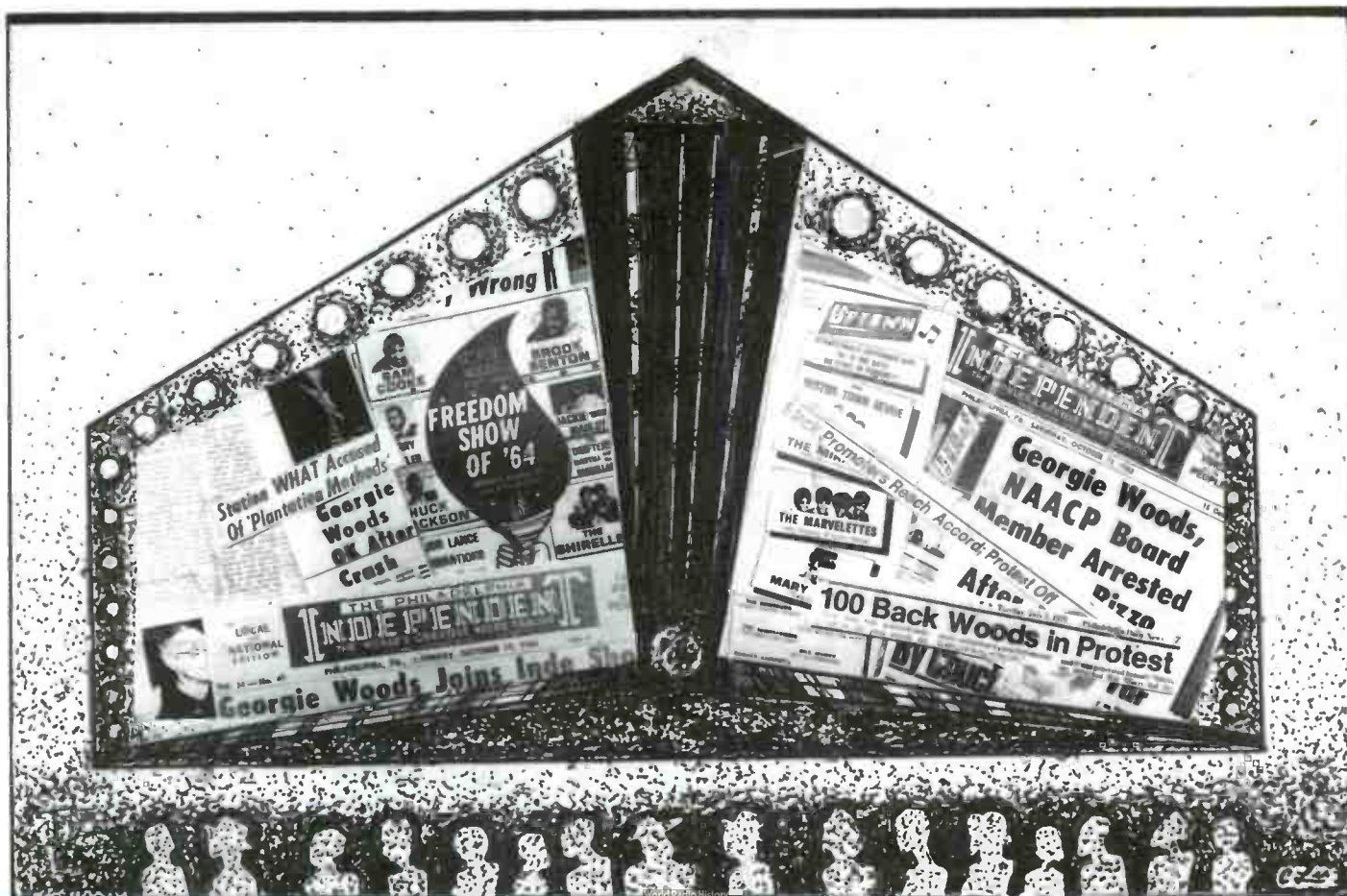
Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Negro Hero (to suggest Dorie Miller)

I had to kick their law into their teeth in order
to save them.
However, I have heard that sometimes you have to deal
Devilishly with drowning men in order to swim
them to shore
or they will haul themselves and you to the trash
and the fish beneath
(When I think of this, I do not worry about a few chipped teeth).

(In a Southern city a white man said
Indeed, I'd rather be dead)
Indeed, I'd rather be shot in the head
or ridden to waste on the back of a flood
Then saved by the drop of a black man's blood.
Naturally, the important thing is, I helped to save them,
them and a part of their democracy.
Even if I had to kick their law into their teeth in order
to do that for them.
And I am feeling well and settled in myself because I
believe it was a good job.
Despite this possible horror: that they might prefer the
preservation of their law in all its sick dignity and
their knives
To the continuation of their creed
and their lives

...Gwendolyn Brooks
(Pulitzer Prize Winner for Poetry, 1950)



Stages

“It used to be called boogie-woogie, it used to be called blues, used to be called rhythm and blues...It's called rock now.”

---Chuck Berry

Stages. Changes. Destinies. Origins. Discoveries. Stages. Back and forth through time. When Georgie Woods returned to Harlem after a little over 2 years in the U.S. Navy he entered another stage of his development. In fact the stages began to come and go like the A train moving from stop to stop. Changes. Stages. Things began to move faster for George.

Q: When you first came out of the Navy what kind of work did you do?

Woods: I was shooting pool and hustling to make some money. Writing a few numbers. That's all we could do. I got my '52-20'-\$20 dollars a week for 52 weeks out of the year. That's what they gave us when we got out. The 52-20 club. That's what we got for 52 weeks. Then I went to school. After I exhausted my 52 weeks, I couldn't get a job; so they paid you to go to school. That was just another hustle I had.

Q: Did you have to get a GED before you could get into the school?

Woods: No, all they wanted you to do is sign on the dotted line.

Q: Did you go to some refrigerator school around that same time?

Woods: Where did you get that from? That was just to get the money that they paid you for doing it. I know I wasn't going to fix no refrigerators. Then I went to a neon sign school with the neon lights. They paid you for it.

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Q: Were you trying to get a job in New York?

Woods: There were no jobs for black people there. Except if you wanted to get a job as a dishwasher. That's all you could get. Maybe in a factory delivering clothes up and down 8th Avenue.

Q: You weren't trying to do that?

Woods: Well, I did it for a while. I worked in factories.

Q: Not for long?

Woods: As long as I could. I worked in the factory. Delivering clothes from place to place. 8th Avenue. 7th Avenue. 6th Avenue. 5th Avenue, the garment district. We worked from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Delivered clothes. You would have a little cart and push it down the street. I didn't do it long. It was too cold."

Woods and Harry Belafonte Work In Garment District

Life was cold in the big city. Too cold. But George had already established his tenacity. He had gained numerous survival skills. It was in the streets of Harlem that he had learned the ground rules of making it. Instinct. Integrity. Intelligence. He had learned to keep what he was doing very much inside of himself. There was no way he could just sit down and tell you his whole life. This was a man who was in it for the long haul. He had visions of another day, another space and place.

Working alongside Georgie Woods in New York's garment district was another young man whose name destined to encircle the globe. He too had dropped out of school to enlist in the U.S. Navy. They were born a mere two months and ten (10) days apart, one in New York City, the other in Georgia. There were many parallels in their lives. Prior to working side by side in the garment district pushing a dress cart, Woods' new associate had been a

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

maintenance worker in an apartment house. He did such a good job that one of the tenants gave him two tickets, as a tip, for *Home is the Hunter*, an American Negro Theatre production. Who would have know that within a few years the young man of Caribbean parentage (mother - Jamacian and father - Martinique in what was called the French West Indies (F.W.I.)). Pushing those carts daily alongside Georgie Woods was Harry Belafonte, who after seeing *Home is the Hunter*, decided to enroll under the G.I. Bill at Erwin Piscator's Dramatic Workshop. Unable to get an acting job, Belafonte like Woods, ended up in the garment workers' district.

In discussing Belefonte recently, Woods stated, "Me and Harry Belefonte used to deliver clothers together in the garment district... we used to push them trucks up 7th Avenue. That was a long time ago. Long time ago. He started singing down at the Royal Roast, a night club here in New York. That's where he started singing...down in the Village. Singing Day-O. He was a young handsome guy. He was almost as pretty as me. That was in the 1940's. It must have been 1946-1947. Somewhere around there. That was when we worked in the garment district...A lot of people didn't want to do it because they thought it was below their dignity. Wasn't nothing below my dignity to **earn** a dollar."

Georgie Woods and Harry Belafonte working side by side in the garment district. Woods reflects, "I never remind him of that. I don't know. It seems like he doesn't want to...A lot of people don't like to be reminded."

Longshoreman

After leaving the job in the garment district George weathered yet another work experience. As we rolled past Weehawken, New Jersey, George begins discussing his work experience on the Jersey side. "I took the bus. I was working nights. Sometimes I worked days. But night work paid 10% more. Longshoreman, but I was a bad mother fucker. That was a good job; good money." He glances over at the place where he used to work the ships, "They made town houses where I used to work." Like many things in the

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past, the space has been totally transformed. Now there are luxury, 'Riverfront Townhouses', replacing the old Weehawken docking area.

New York's a pretty city and the lights
do shine so bright
New York's a pretty city and the lights
do shine so bright.
But I'd rather be in New Orleans
Walkin' by candle light.

---Genevieve Davis

Well, that may have been how Genevieve Davis felt but there is no indication that Woods shared her sentiments. It was the late 1940's, he was in New York and he was not trying to return to Georgia to walk by no candle light. Working night or day, Woods was in the Big Apple. Things were happening in New York. In Post-World War II America, we begin to see the decline of the big bands and the emergence of black disc jockeys sitting behind the turn table spinning the day away. During his brief stay at Frederick Douglass High School, George had been inspired by sports announcer Mel Allen, to consider a career in this area. George reportedly attended a 13 week course at the Cambridge Broadcasting School, toward that end. It was not easy for blacks to get a job in the broadcasting industry but that was what George was determined to do. There were black disc jockeys in New York City and he was listening to them eagerly.

William Barlow, author of the chapter, "Commercial and Non Commercial Radio", (see *Split Image: African-Americans in the Mass Media*, edited by Jannette L. Dates and William Barlow, Howard University Press 1990), provides some historical background.

"Postwar radio was characterized by both white and black deejays capturing the attention and imagination of a youthful urban audience with the introduction of rhythm and blues formats. As had been the case in similar cross-cultural exchanges in the past, the black innovators set the new styles, in this case pertaining to the

performance of the disc jockey, while their white imitators and benefactors reaped the financial benefits. As late as 1947, an *Ebony* article noted that only sixteen black disc jockeys were at that time on the air ways. Throughout the country, the total number of 'wax spinners' on the air was at least three thousand. Disc Jockeys: Sixteen Spielers Ride Kilocycle Range on Twenty one Stations. [*Ebony* November, 1947] These lopsided figures had begun to change dramatically by the next decade. Moreover, African Americans who took to the airways in the 1950's tended to be more knowledgable and effective communicators, on the one hand, and rebellious and even extravagant radio broadcasters, on the other hand - especially if judged by the established decorum of radio announcers. They threw themselves into the medium with an abundance of enthusiasm and lack of professional pretensions. They talked a stream of street 'jive', using strange-sounding words, some of which were their own making. They clapped their hands, danced, shouted encouragement and sang along with the records they played on the air. They assumed zany radio personae like 'Doctor Bop', 'Daddy Rabbit', 'Professor Jive', 'Doctor Daddy-O', 'Poppa Stoppa', 'Nighthawk', 'Moohah', 'Sugar Daddy', 'Charlie Hattie' and 'Hot Rod'. In short, the first wave of black disc jockeys were audio tricksters, the more unique and outrageous their characters and stories, the longer their listening audiences."

This new breed of media rebels included:

- * Joe Bostic (WBNX)
- * Willie Bryant and Ray Carroll (WHOM)
- * Phil 'Doctor Jive' Gordon and Nipsy Russell (WLIB)
- * Tommy Smalls (WWRL)
- * Jack Walter 'The Pear Shaped Talker' (WOV)

These were all in New York and most were heard by Georgie Woods.

WORD Them Up! WERD! W-E-R-D were the call letters for the first known black owned radio station in the United States. The owner was J.B. Blayton. A black certified public accountant and Atlanta businessman. His son, J.B. Jr, was brought in as a partner and general manager of the newly purchased 900-watt A.M. radio

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station, thus returning from Chicago and bringing the first black program director in Atlanta, Jack Gibson (known as Jack The Rapper). This was in 1949.

Jack The Rapper

Jack Gibson carries us back to those days. In speaking of the black disc jockeys of the period he notes, "We were the community. We were so involved with our black community. You have to understand in the early days when we started WERD, there were no black heroes. There were no Jesse Jacksons or Whitney Youngs or Dr. Kings. The only hero Black America had in those days was Joe Louis, the Heavyweight Champion of the world. Then the disc jockey became the local Joe Louis because he was able to talk to them daily and to get together with their problems. So anything that happened in the black community we were able to talk about it. One particular case with me in Atlanta...I became like the mouthpiece of the police department. And the chief himself would call me if he had any problems in the black community. He would call me and ask me if I would please tell my people to stop the ruckus they were having, maybe in 'Buttermilk Bottom' or something. I would go on the air and say 'Look, we can't have that, cause if you do, you're going to spend this weekend over on Decatur Street- that was the jail. As soon as I got off the air I would come into where they were having the trouble, and I would help solve it. In fact, they gave me the name, Dr. Ralph Bunche because I was a mediator for many a fight in Atlanta."

Black Disc Jockey as mediator. Ironically he is talking about a period when Ralph Bunche was reputed to be one of the world's greatest mediators. Had he not forged an Israeli-Arab agreement that led to the establishment of the State of Israel? As a result he became the first black to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. So if 'Jack The Rapper' was being called Ralph Bunche, it is an indication of his far reaching influence. Had he been called Bunche 15 years later it could have been different.

Meanwhile in New York City, Georgie Woods was contemplating leaving the city to embark upon a career as a broadcaster,

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

a professional communicator. Hadn't there been an all black radio station already established in Atlanta? Wasn't there a Ken Knight playing spirituals, a 'Jockey Jack' Gibson doing bop, pop and rhythm and blues, and blues. A Johnny Martin with the bop, blues and spirituals. What about Bobby Brisendine (pop, bop and blues), Alice Washington (rhythm and blues), Ray McIver (classical and religious- pruto gospel) and James Patricito, Blues Master. Surely there must be an opportunity somewhere in these United States."

Chicago Stage

A series of events happened in Georgie Woods' life during the late 1940's. Stages- One of a series of particular phases in one's historical development; a period or step in a process, activity or development - Stages. All stages in him becoming what he now is. It is during this period that he married Hortense Devigner and began to assume the responsibilities of a family man. He became even more determined to make it in his chosen career of broadcasting.

The Chicago period is one of the least explored aspects of Georgie Wood's life. He has enumerated reasons why he went to the Windy City. It was 1950 and Georgie was ready for a change in life. It was time to enter another stage on his long journey. At the time he was unloading shrimp in what must have been a grueling work environment. To supplement his income he hustled pool and did other things to supplement his income. By now he had learned the urban way of surviving. Hadn't he been on his own since 13 or 14 years old? Who else could he depend upon but himself? Having come of age at the height of segregation. Woods knew what was required to make it out there.

Like many young black men in American society, Woods understood the burden of restrictive housing, earnings and life options. Yet, he was not the kind of person who would just give in and blame it on the system. He felt that he was smart enough, resourceful enough to rise to a higher ground despite the vicissi-

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tudes of life. He also appreciated the importance of black respectability. Knowing how to carry yourself in a dignified manner no matter what station you may occupy in life at a given time. How do black men master this strange dilemma? How do they go to work daily, knowing that mobility on this or any job is greatly curtailed because of the color of their skin? What is it in the cultural world that sustains them in the time of need?

Flashback. The pages of John A. Williams' novel, *Captain Blackman* takes us back in time. Chosen Place. Another time.

"Basie's 'One O'Clock Jump' throbbed in his head; Al Hibler's hip voice echoed over talk of rib cages, G. S.W's and morphine syrettes. Erskine Hawkins and Dash and Bascomb. Blackman thought he smelled perfume at various times of the day, and at evening colors, when he stood looking toward the flag, he thought of their faces and bodies. There was so much of it out there and from time to time, with the WACs, in here.

Just past the midway point, Benjy and Blackman, on leave together drifted into a USO dance in Waukegan, having failed everywhere else. The record playing was a Lucky Millinder side, Sister Rosetta Tharpe Singing".

Voices move in and out of the semi-conscious states. People are moving in and out of cities. Had not the great migration following, World War I and World War II doubled Chicago's black population to a massive soul station? Now it was time to move on. Had to move to another city. George had been to Chicago as a young sixteen year old navy black. He knew something of this city. New York was getting too crowded in the streets and hustling/hanging stations of Harlem.

Memories. Stages. Memories. "Well, in the cities they were segregated. But on the farms they were all right there. You lived next door to somebody white. In rural areas there was no such thing as seperation of housing. We lived in shacks. We didn't have no houses. Some people had houses. But most of us lived in shacks."

Q: How was the housing condition in Chicago when you went out there? Was it hard for a black to find a place to live?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Woods: Well, you could find places if you had money.

Q: Did you know somebody there already?

Woods: No, I didn't know anybody in Chicago at all.

Q: You mean you just took off and flew from New York to Chicago?

Woods: Well, the reason I went to Chicago is that I had found this money. West Indian Jimmy had dropped \$100 on the floor.

Q: Is that a real story George?

Woods: West Indian Jimmy was known to hurt somebody. And I saw him drop a \$100, cause he was gambling. And I picked this \$100 and kept it. I always thought that he would find out so that's when I left New York.

Q: And you went to Chicago. You went a long ways from West Indian Jimmy?

Woods: I got as far as I could away from West Indian Jimmy because West Indian Jimmy was known to fuck you up. And he was looking for that \$100. Back then it was like \$1000. To go to Chicago it only cost about \$35 of less.

Q: So you had money left over?

Woods: I had money left over to get me a room.

Q: You had enough for a whole week.

Woods: Almost a month.

Q: Did you know West Indian Jimmy before?

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Woods: Yeah. I knew him. We used to gamble together. But he was older than me. I was a kid. Young.

Aside from getting as far away from West Indian Jimmy as possible, George also had hopes of breaking into the broadcast industry in that city. "I went out there looking for a job. Trying to be on radio. But I couldn't get on. I asked Al Benson and Jack Cooper to help me. But they wouldn't help me..."

In order to get a sense of Al Benson's status as Disc Jockey in Chicago, let us turn to the account found in Nelson George's book, *The Death of Rhythm And Blues*. In referring to a black publications commentary on Afro-deejaying Nelson George opines, "One man *Ebony* mentioned, but only in passing, would become one of the most influential black deejays of all times. But it shouldn't be surprising that *Ebony* made little note of Al Benson's style, since he was just the sort of character any self respecting upwardly mobile black would view as a discredit to his race. 'His distressing grappling with words over two syllables once brought laughs of derision from many, but they could not laugh away his ability to reach out across the air and win vast audiences of listening Negro women and teenage girls! Wrote one black publication in the fifties, 'Even today one of the big questions in Chicago radio circles is, How does that Al Benson continue to get away with it?'

At his peak Benson, aka the Midnight Gambler, hosted five shows and twenty hours of programming a week, earning as much as \$100,000 a year in the process. Eddie O'Jay, a young deejay in the early fifties in Milwaukee recalls, 'Benson killed the king's english and I don't know if he did it on purpose or not. Everybody had to see Al if they wanted to see the black market in Chicago, whether it was beer or rugs or Nu Nile hair cream...He wasn't pretending to be white. He sounded black. They knew he was and most of us were proud of the fact. 'Here's a black voice coming out of my little radio and we know it's him!' The lessons Benson taught about the appeal and profitability of his 'black everyman' style were adopted all over the country, ushering in the era of 'per-

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

sonality' deejays?

In the case of Jack Cooper the other disc jockey, George asked for help; he had the distinction of being the pioneer black D.J. Inasmuch as these two men were the ones Georgie singled out to assist him get into broadcasting while in Chicago, it is essential that one knows more about them. William Barlow provides useful background on Cooper. He states, "In 1926 Jack L. Cooper left Washington D.C., for Chicago where he worked in advertising and sales for the *Chicago Defender* [a weekly newspaper] until launching his first radio venture on WGBC in 1927. WGBC was a low-power 'ethnic radio station' that sold airtime slots to German, Polish, Lithuanian, Greek, Italian and now African-American entrepreneurs, who in turn produced ethnic-language radio shows as a vehicle for soliciting advertising dollars from small businesses in their respective communities. Cooper's show, initially called, 'The Negro Hour' was a pioneering achievement in black radio history, it was a breakthrough program that set important precedents for what would follow. For example, Cooper featured first and foremost, the latest recordings of the leading black dance bands of the era, such as those by Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, Fletcher Henderson, Andy Kirk, Count Basie, Jimmy Lunford, and Chick Webb, as well as famous vocalists like Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller. This enabled him to build up a loyal black audience, as he was the only person on the air in Chicago playing the popular black music recorded on the race labels. In addition, he developed the first regular black newscast, utilizing material gathered from the *Chicago Defender*, and other black publications. Later, he created the Missing Persons Program to help itinerant black migrants locate their kin folks in the city."

By the time Georgie Woods appealed to Jack Cooper he was reputedly "a millionaire who owned his own broadcast studio and advertising agency, the latter employed as many as ten staff writers and a team of satellite DJs to program the forty hours of airtime on four different radio stations under contract. Jack Cooper's mastery of the urban brokerage system in ethnic radio paved the way for other African-Americans hoping to break into

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commercial radio..."

Unfortunately, Jack Cooper did not respond positively to Wood's sincere effort to enter the broadcast industry. Despite these temporary setbacks George remained determined. He stayed in Chicago from 1950-51 hoping to break the sound barrier. In the interim, life had to go on. Woods said, "I stayed out there a year. My first daughter was born in Chicago - Janet. She's now married and living in Fayetteville, North Carolina."

Continuing to describe the Chicago period, Woods notes, "I got a job as a dishwasher and I worked in a factory." When he first moved there he got a room at the black owned Roberts Motor Inn on South Wabash Avenue. And later the YMCA where he later paid \$7.00 a week. He later moved in with a family on Vernon Street, not very far from where The Honorable Elijah Muhammad had an apartment. As fate would have it George lived right in back of the Regal Theatre where all the black performers would gather. It was the equivalent of the Apollo in New York. George had a variety of jobs during his year in Chicago. "I went out there to get a job on the radio, but it never came through. So then I had to get other jobs and work on other kinds of things... I worked way out on Belmont Avenue, way out in South Chicago. And they made plastics. I worked in a factory there. Then I got a job on the Erie Railroad. I worked on the railroad... I had worked on the railroad before I went to Chicago, but I quit. Remember, I showed you the place in Weehawken, New Jersey, where I unloaded the docks."

The Chicago experience strengthened George's resolve. He left that city even more determined to do for self. Self reliance has been one of the common features of Georgie Woods' life. At each stage of development he has had to increase his tenacity. Is it any wonder when he speaks now, you realize this man has established his tenacity. He has proven to be a long distance runner.

I've got so much, so much trouble
Sometimes I sit and cry
I'm gonna find my mother's grave
Fall on the tombstone and die.

--- Roy Brown

The Blues

Chicago was a big Blues town. That is where Disc Jockey E. Rodney Jones became King of the Blues Waves. Deep dark mystic of the Chicago Blues mode. Blacks had come from Mississippi, New Orleans and other parts south destined to make new lives for themselves. But they brought with them the folkways of their past. Blues Station. A place to reside.

At this stage of George's life, he was like the great blues master, Robert Jackson, *Standing at the Crossroads*. His history swirled around his head like a West African harmattan. Did he look to the blues to get through this period in his life? "It didn't even appeal to me. Some of it was good. Some of Ray Charles old Blues songs and B.B. King's. That's about the extent of that... It was not the best feeling. It was too sad. It brought back too many bad memories. So I tried to forget the sounds of all the hard times we had. The Blues only reminded me. I tried to get it out of my mind. And that's why the Blues never got to be big with Black people because it reminded them of what they had gone through. And the whites think it's some kind of phenomena. But then, again they always catch things later, after we have had it... Like soul food. They've even gotten into soulfood..."

The smell of lunch boxes and dinner platters could be experienced on that train ride back to New York. George and his family were returning back East, back to the Big Apple. Black man always on the go, always trying to find the best place to make things work. Back in Harlem where mass based black culture remained fluid. The great Philly Poet, playwright, music, film and theater critic Larry Neal brings us closer to that core culture that impacted George. "We believe that within black culture there is black life, folk culture, myth and values that can be assumed by the writer [disc jockey] and given back to the people to broaden their consciousness because we need them as much as they need us. We don't see ourselves seperated from them. There is no alienation between me and the people in Harlem. I see myself involved in that particular life style. My work is about that. I try to make it about that... This distinction between art and life should

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not be clear-cut. That's how it was in African life anyway, life and art were totally integrated." Neal has crystallized what young George was formulating in the return to Harlem. "It used to be called boogie woogie, it used to be called blues, used to be called rhythm and blues. It's called rock now.

-----Chuck Berry

Stages: Back To New York

The flashing of a sign and the Apollo is within view again. George, is again on familiar turf, his own stomping ground. Enough time and distance has separated Woods and West Indian Jimmy:

Sometimes I Rhyme Slow!

Back into the Harlem nights but not the Harlem Rage. He had already gone too far in the inner zone to lose faith, to declare rage as his state of being. He had to return to the streets. They were always hardcore and hellifying. George kept on moving. You don't just stand there wondering what to do. "Hustling was the favorite past time. You have to hustle to try and make some money. You know, you live by your wits: didn't have no job. So, you'd shoot pool, play some numbers, shoot some craps. We did all of that... We always got money. It wasn't that much. You talking about a couple dollars a week. You could always get a couple dollars. Food didn't cost nothing in Harlem. Food was cheap. A meal cost \$25c. Go to Father Divine and they'd give it to you for a nickle. Divines. Nickle for a hair cut." Bless you father and mother. Peace Out!

Sometimes I Rhyme Quick!

Memories. "We went to Crawfordville to get ice... My mother could make the best ice cream. Homemade ice cream... I ate anything... Anything I could get my hands on. My father, we never

really got to know him too much. My mother was the one who kept the family going... I remember vaguely my grandmother on my mother's side. But I don't recall too much about her... They were all born in Georgia.

Memories. "Before I went to Chicago. I unloaded shrimps. Well we had what they called a shakeup. The guy who did the hiring could call off a certain number of people to do the work. And seniority usually took care of all that. But they shook up everyday. If you got shaken up, you didn't have no job. That's what they called it - a shakeup... Well, you go there and if a lot of people don't show...you're next in line...if you're a good worker... yeah, you step right in..."

WORK. Got to get some work. Can't make it other wise. Man, gotta have some work.

It's like a one for the treble and two
for the bass

Theodore - let's dog the place

You don't stop, you don't stop, that
body rock

Just clap your hands, it's the
sure shot sound

Brace yourself - for the one
that goes down.

---- Grand Wizard Theodore

And you don't stop. Work it. Don't stop. You are rocking it uptown, moving through the Grand Funk Railroad. New York. New York. So nice they had to name it twice. Return the Flex. Can I Kick It. Tribe Called Quest. And you know the rest.

Georgie Woods is back in New York for a short time. It's Show Time on the Radio. It's like Radio Raheem declared "Can't Live Without The Radio."

George: Hal Jackson was one of the guys who highly inspired me. He used to have 'The House That Jack Built' down in Washington, D.C., years ago. And it was Nationwide. It was broadcasted on a network. It was on ABC. Sponsored by Coca-Cola.

Prior to picking up the MIC, Woods had heard a range of disc jockeys. "I heard a lot of guys. Tommy Smalls, Willie Bryant and

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Ray Carroll used to play jazz as disc jockeys in New York... Freddie Robbins. Bill Williams. These are the people I used to listen to. Before that there was Doctor Jive- Phil Gordon. I used to listen to them when I came home from school. WWRL. They had a program called 'Doctor Jive', that was the name of the program. Then 'Doctor' Tommy Smalls got the job and he became Doctor Jive.

Doc Wheeler Names Him The Guy With The Goods

Bulletin: Nationwide this announcement appeared.

"WWRL radio in New York initiates an hour-long R & B (Rhythm & Blues) show in an after-midnight slot. Georgie Woods, formerly from Chicago is the deejay. WOV radio, also in New York, counters by announcing that it will air an hour of R & B every afternoon featuring two of their most popular personalities, Willie Bryant and Ray Carroll."

The historic moment occurred on April 21, 1952. That is when George finally got his own show. A newspaper account one year later states, "Woods decided he wanted to enter radio after winning an amateur disc jockey show at his alma mater, Benjamin Franklin High School, in New York City. George then decided to take a step further and after a 13 weeks course in a radio school, 'pestered' other disc jockeys in the area for pointers. He gives his greatest credit to the help of Willie Bryant, former band great, now a disc jockey in New York."

The above account, like many biographical accounts of the subject contains inaccuracies. The historical record is at variance with the assertions found in the early newspaper account. In an attempt to clarify the circumstances surrounding his early departure from WWRL in Woodside, New York, the following dialogue occurred.

Woods: Returning to New York "around 1952, [sic] I was able to do a little hustling... shooting pool, writing some numbers and stuff like that. I survived for a year. Then I got on WWRL in New York, my first job [in broadcasting].

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Q: That would be in 1952?

Woods: Yeah, 1952.

Q: There is legend and there is the truth. You say that you got fired from that job?

Woods: Yeah!

Q: What really happened, George?

Woods: Well, Dr. Jive wouldn't help me either. I asked him about what records I should play and he told me the wrong records to play. The ones that the station didn't want me to play. He felt threatened because I was young and ambitious. He thought I would take his place. They always tried to keep you out by having that mentality. So he told me the wrong records and I didn't know what to play. *The only one that helped me was Doc Wheeler.* He was a spiritual [music] disc jockey. He was a big time disc jockey. He gave me the name, "The Guy With The Goods."

Q: So it was Doc Wheeler, huh...?

Woods: Doc Wheeler, he lined it up, 'The Man With The Goods.' He gave me that nickname.

Q: He did? So that's where that started?

Woods: Yeah, in New York. "The Guy With The Goods" is what he called me. He would always say that when I was coming on. Because he came on before I did. When he left, he'd say, "y'all stay tuned for the guy with the goods, Georgie Woods."

Q: And you were there for four or five months?

Woods: I stayed there for three months...I would never get the right music to play.

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Q: Why wouldn't you get the right music?

Woods: Well, I like to play music that I like. And I just liked, 'One Mint Julip'. That was a big song by the Clovers. The station owner didn't want me to play it. Because he felt it was promoting alcohol. And one night I played it and he fired me. He said, "get out of here, go get some experience and come back."

George never went back to WWRL.

Stages!

Stages!

Stages!

The Philly Stage # II, y - z Rhythm Is A Groove #2

Sun against best

the best against black motion

to flame and dance

while packed into the best

ALL CLAP HANDS AND SING

do the foot shuffle/the colors

shuffle the best/and the slave speak

Sun come black, juju wonder song.

Sun come black, juju wonder song.

Drum sing/speak black/black Skin Skin

Shuffle the best/shuffle the color/the best speaks

Color the shuffle/black brother brother

brother/brother/hurl dream into sky

make Sun come, hot pulse flaming

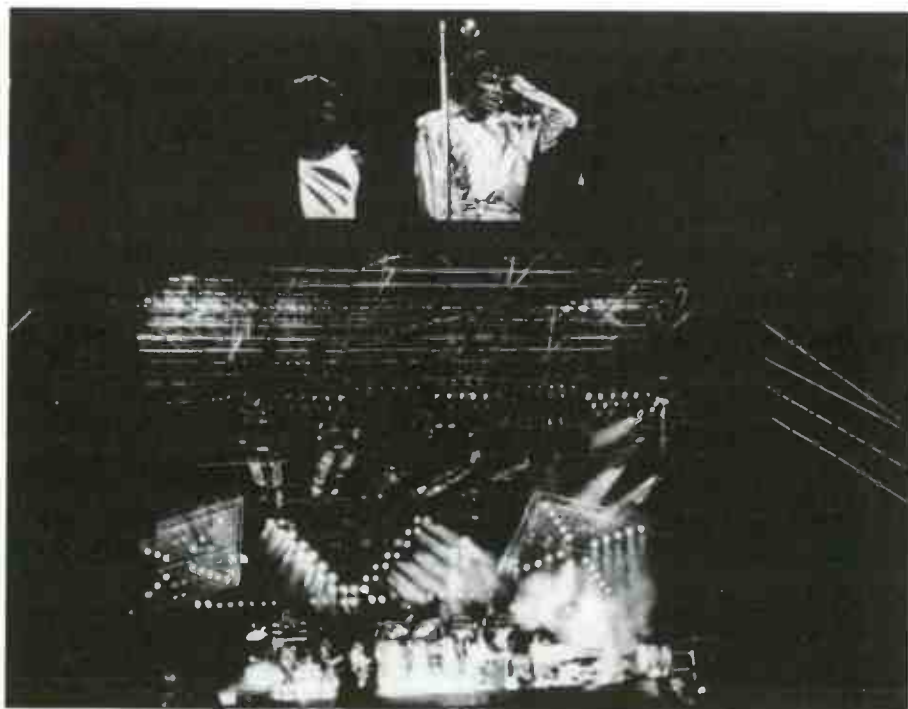
Yeah!!!

----Larry Neal

Stage is set. Woods is about to arrive in Philly. New Day Coming. World. Whirl. Rhythm and Blues about to become Rock and Roll. Reel Time. Philly Time. It is the early 1950's in this Hip City. "Is that my Junie Boy running with that fast crowd?" Flame and Dance. Rock and Roll. Rhythm and Blues. Can I tell you this



Michael and Randy Jackson wait for haircut at Woody's barbershop.
(l-r)Woody,Randy and Michael,George,Jr.



Leandre Jackson Photo

Randy and Michael Jackson on stage during Victory Tour.Philly



by Charles G. Lee

story or are you gonna send me through all these changes.

Retrospect and Prospect

"I have known Georgie Woods ever since he's been in Philadelphia. I have known him professionally. I have known him as a close friend. I have watched him work, I have watched him play. He was - and still is good at work; he was and still is - good at play.

The man has a kind heart. There is much of the philanthropist in him. He's a 'soft touch' for the man, woman or child in need, he's a good guy to the kids on the street. He's one of the most talented disc jockeys to ever push a record to the Hit Parade, he's a 'big brother' to musical groups and combos just starting out after the 'pot of gold' so hard to find in the entertainment world.

To this day, nearly 18 years later, I can remember the first time George Woods came to Philadelphia to get his first job as a disc jockey. The radio station was WHAT, the owner Billy Banks, the manager, Miss Dolly Banks. The big star at WHAT at that time was the fabulous 'Jocko' Henderson. Kae Williams, was there too, doing a morning show.

Georgie Woods was a lean, lank, hardcore youngster who spoke softly. Some seeing him for the first time may have thought that he would never make it big in radio, or as a civil rights leader, or a musical impresario. But, Georgie Woods greatly impressed me that day. I might not have envisioned him as developing into the solid star that he did, but I was certain that I was gazing at a young man who had enough God-given talents to make it big in the field of his choice."

Those are the words veteran *Philadelphia Tribune Journalist*, Jack Saunders, who has to be counted among the first group of journalists to devote considerable space to Woods' activities. It was long before the whole city began to take notice. Woods was the brother brother at of that time.

An early newspaper account from 1953 reads, "Phillies most recent addition to the ranks of its disc jockeys is handsome George Woods who has been 'talking to the girls' over the airwaves twice-

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a-day at WHAT. George lives with his attractive wife and family at 1232 Wallace Street. He came to Philly he said after reading an ad 'disc jockey wanted'. George started his duties on January 7. Station management said the handsome jockey is on a six-months tryout basis...George bashfully mentions that his likes are nice girls, then laughingly beams serious and points out his hobbies as movies, dancing and reading."

George Speaks: Living in North Philly

I saw an article in *Jet* magazine that they needed a disc jockey at WHAT. I told them I was a big time disc jockey in New York and they gave me the job. And they paid me \$25 a week to come in. Dolly Banks, that witch.

Q: You had a place to stay?

Woods: Well, I had some relatives here. So I didn't have a problem. But I stayed with my cousins on Wallace Street. Then I moved with the Cranes on 39th street.

Q: Crane, jeweler, from South street? How did you come to stay with them?

Woods: Well, traveling around the city you get to meet a lot of people. And I found out they had a spare room, so that's where I went to live. I only lived in two places in North Philadelphia; Wallace street and Girard Court. Then I moved to West Philly around 39th and Union streets.

Billie Holiday at Emerson's

It was in South Philly, however, that George remembers seeing the immortal jazz stylist- Billie Holiday.

Q: Where did you see Billie Holiday?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Woods: At the Emerson Club.

Q: Is that the time they arrested her?

Woods: Yeah, and Joe Louis was the m.c. That was at 15th and Bainbridge. Interviewed Joe Louis one time...Joe Louis, the fighter, on WHAT at 1515 Walnut.

Q: What was he like as an interviewer?

Woods: He couldn't talk. I liked him though. I admired what he had done. The accomplishments. I went to see him down at the club...Emerson. It was a package.

Q: What happened to Billie at Emerson's?

Woods: I think the Ferguson Squad raided and they arrested her. I don't know what kind of drugs she was using.

Q: Was she performing on stage when it happened?

Woods: Yeah. I wasn't there that night, but I know the story.

Q: Was this before you had done your first stage show?

Woods: Yeah. This is 1953 I'm talking about.

Q: So your first big show wasn't until '56-'57?

Woods: Somewhere around there. We did some one nighters. We used to do mostly dances.

Q: What were the big dances at that time?

Woods: Well, slow dragging.

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Q: They weren't doing any fast dances?

Woods: Not until the twist came out. Before the twist came out everybody used to dance real close.

Q: Things were a little different than when you went out, it was a night out, right?

Woods: Well, I never went to that many dances 'cause I could never dance.

Q: So where did you go for entertainment when you first came to Philly?

Woods: Well, there were a lot of things to do. I didn't go to dances, but I'd go out on appearances and I'd go out and talk to people. You'd go to a dance and say hello, how you feel. Listen to the show. So there was always something to do.

Q: Now two years after you got here you started writing a column for the *Philadelphia Tribune*. How did that come about?

Woods: I figured it was a way to get exposure. I didn't actually write it. Jack Saunders, who edited the Tribune at the time did.

Q: You would tell Jack and Jack would write it?

Woods: Then Masco Young would help me with it.

At the time both Georgie Woods and Kae Williams had columns in the *Philadelphia Tribune*. This proved beneficial to all concerned parties. The print media coverage only reinforced the daily electronic media pounding that the Philly audience was already receiving. Name recognition was a big factor. Additionally, the columns are useful in helping to make clear the topics that concerned him at that time (1955).

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Q: So, essentially you would tell them different things and they would write it out for you?

Woods: I would first tell them how I was feeling about the music, the songs, the artists that I met and stuff like that. It was mostly entertainment features.

Q: In one of your earlier columns you talked about 'adult delinquency'?

Woods: That was the big thing then. Now, its like drugs are the big thing. But then it was teenage delinquency. Kids just going out fighting.

Q: And you were trying to address both the parents and the kids. The same way you are doing now?

Woods: Yeah.

Q: Hasn't changed much. You're talking about 35 years ago.

Woods: Well, it has just gotten more dangerous now.

Q: Is your message still the same?

Woods: Yes. The message is still the same. But it's a lot harder now. Because you are dealing with a hardcore. Life was meaningful then. Now it doesn't mean that much to a lot of people.

Exploitative

George describes the working conditions at WHAT during his earlier tenure as deploreable. WHAT like most "Negro radio stations" were owned by whites. Woods notes, "Well they always exploited black people. Well not exploited. They used black people. And black disc jockeys because there was a market there. It wasn't about them loving us or anything like that. Or even liking

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us, for that matter. It was economics that played the role. They gave us a job because they wanted to make some money with us. Later on they tried to project the reason they did it was because they loved black people! So many of us got fooled and sucked into that.

Q: Were the disc jockeys themselves aware of it? What were they doing about it?

Woods: What could you do, there was no Black ownership within the stations. We didn't have any Black owned stations. And you know sometimes we wanted to be on the air. You'd do it for nothing. Like I started \$25 a week, because I wanted to be on the air. And a lot of disc jockeys didn't get much more than that.

Q: Did you take a part time job? How did you support your family?

Woods: Well it was a promise. I guess expectation. You expected it to get better.

Q: Were you able to take a share of the advertising revenue that came in?

Woods: Well no, I had that \$25 base salary, then we'd do dances. That's why we had to do shows...

Q: Did they allow you to keep the revenue from the dances?

Woods: Yeah.

Q: Oh, you could keep everything from the dances?

Woods: We had to do shows and record hops to augment the lack of salary.

Q: Is that why disc jockeys were doing so many things in one night?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Woods: Yeah, because we weren't getting paid.

Q: I thought it was promotional?

Woods: No. No. We only did it because that was the only way of making money.

Q: So if they were paying you a decent salary at the station, you wouldn't have done it?

Woods: We wouldn't have done it.

Q: You had to make arrangements yourself?

Woods: The station was too busy getting rich, and you know, sending their kids off to college.

Q: Essentially part of the reason why you started doing all those shows was because you had to make money?

Woods: That was the reason.

It started initially as an effort to supplement his meager income of only \$25 a week, but it wasn't long before Georgie Woods became fully immersed in those record hops, talent shows. This is when he became a cultural hero. In cities like Philadelphia, black music was inextricably tied to the raising of consciousness, cultural, love, social.

Following World War II, young teenagers became even greater participants in the economy. They took on even more responsibility as both producers and consumers. So they went out and bought the records of their day. These were records that Georgie Woods was playing on the air.

In William Graebner's *Coming of Age in Buffalo* considerable discussion is given to the rise of youth culture in the 1950's.

"The musical culture of post-war youth was extraordinarily

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diverse. Its major components included the disc jockey, dancing, records, live performances, and intense consumer and fan loyalty. Several major changes occurred in this musical culture in the fifteen years after 1945, including:

- 1) The rise of rock and roll.
- 2) The emergence of 45 rpm records as the industry's standard.
- 3) The gradual development of the recorded, rather than the live, performance on the quintessential musical experience."

"The 45 rpm war both a representation of the desire of capitalists to penetrate and profit from the youth market and an artifact of the new youth culture. In 1945, recorded music was available only on the large and brittle '78 rpm format. The rpm record was introduced in 1949 and became the industry standard in the mid 1950's, so that it was soon possible to purchase a record player that would play **only** at the 45 rpm speed. Four speed machines belonged to an earlier shake-up-period, before the industry settled on 45 and 33 1/3 as its two base recording speeds, unlike the 78's, the new 45's were strong, portable (especially in the cases designed just for them), and ideally suited to mobile youth."

Woods reflected the mobility of urban youth. He was always on the go making several appearances in one day while manning radio programs whose popularity encircled the city of Philadelphia.

To get some sense of just how popular he was at that time let us turn to two creditable sources: The informed commentary of one who was in terms of service the dean of black disc jockeys at the time- Randy Dixon, and a nationwide survey of black disc jockeys.

Color Magazine Names Georgie Woods Among Nation' Top Disc Jockeys For 1953

"George Woods: Philadelphia's Man With the Goods keeps the Quaker city rocking with his daily show, 'house of jive' on WHAT." George learned the radio biz in the Army as a G.I.



Courtesy George Woods Collection

George In The MIX

The Mystic Night Bloods



Courtesy George Woods Collection

**Slightly tilted The Mighty Three remember
"Evil", "You Can't Hide Love"**

**Music men realize
to Turn Out The Lights
is to hear the sound
on The Stairway to Heaven**

**They are witnesses
Maurice White, Kenny Gamble and Georgie Woods
holding the MIC**

-copyright, 1992, James G. Spady

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

announcer [sic].

Following is a nation wide line of top ranking black DJ's;
-EVELYN ROBINSON (sister of Sugar Ray Robinson whom Walter Winchell called the 'prettiest disc jockey on the air') WOV, New York, NY.

- 'HOT ROD' HULBERT, WITH, Baltimore, MD.
- TOMMY "DR. JIVE" SMALLS, WWRL, New York.
- BRISTOE BRYANT, WJLB, Detroit, Michigan.
- LARRY WILLIAMS, WAAA, Winston Salem, NC.
- BABE BAKER, WSAI, Cincinnati, OH.
- DON BARKSDALE, KROW, Oakland, California.
- NAT D. WILLIAMS, WDIA, Memphis, TN.
- CHARLES 'HOPPY' ADAMS, Annapolis, MD.
- RAY MCIVER, WGBE, Atlanta, Georgia.
- ERNIE WAITS, WNOP, Newport, Kentucky.
- HAL WADE, WNJR, Newark, NJ.
- SLIM GAILLIARD, WNJR, Newark, NJ.
- JACK SURRELL, WXYZ, Detroit, Michigan.
- JOE ADAMS, KOWL, Los Angeles, CA.
- HUNTER HANCOCK, Los Angeles, CA.
- EDDIE TEAMER, WHIT, Memphis, TN.
- AL WILSON, WIVK, Knoxville, TN.
- MARY DEE, WHOD, Pittsburgh, PA.
- ACE ANDERSON, WMRA, Montgomery, Alabama.
- LEROY WHITE, WJLB, Detroit, Michigan.
- TONY DAVIS, KWBC, Dallas, Texas.
- CHUCK COFIELD, WHKK, Akron, OH.
- GEORGIE WOODS, WHAT, Philadelphia, PA.
- 'Bucky' JOHNSON, WSRK, West Palm Beach, FL.
- Sarah Lou and Buddy Bowser, WLIB, N.Y.

The commentary preceding the list of top dee jays '53 read as follows.

"Once again the editors of *COLOR* Magazine are pleased to pay tribute to the men and women of America's radio industry. The personalities you see on these pages, represent of cross-section of the hard-working platter spinners who bring good music, friendliness and daily sales messages into your homes."

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The other earlier account by one of Georgie's peers, Randy Dixon is quite informed. And is an indication of the esteem in which he was held by at least one veteran member of the profession - "Of all dee jays Georgie Woods is one of the most successful... just turned 29, Georgie has endeared himself to Delaware Valley teenagers to such a degree that no one approached his popularity... His youth appearance and the zest he displays around his teenage worshippers, while sincere and a part of him, is not the whole Georgie Woods. In fact, he's a king and thorough business man, a promoter and showman who pays attention to painstaking details that reaps dividends. Georgie's shows pack them in. He draws capacity and he's the only dee jay in this area whose show hits the sell out jackpot. And it is not accidental. Last time out Georgie drew 60,000 cash customers on a ten-day stand..., his clients are like the United Nations... he calls his radio program an all American stint and his listeners transcend racial lines to embrace all and everybody."

Attracts Large White listenership

The point is well taken, Georgie's shows were attended by a cross segment of ethnics in the early days. It was he who brought the sound of rock and roll to the air waves. The shows were not only immensely popular but they functioned as cultural determinates for so many people. Woods said of that period, "There was a time I had more white listeners than Black listeners in the city. In fact I had so many white listeners they [mgm't] said I must be playing the wrong music and I'm not attracting the blacks." What management did not understand is that racial segmentation in the market place did not apply to Georgie Woods the way it may have for others. He was playing black musicians who literally transformed the cultural tastes of white listeners. It is quite similar to Rap Music, another African American Cultural formation.

We are talking about the period between 1953-1956. That is the period Georgie Woods became the 'King of Rock and Roll', Emperor of Rhythm and Blues and Master of what was to be called

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Soul Music, in honor of the soul people who created it.

Where ever you travel in this city there are people who went to his shows. It was Georgie Woods who brought them their first highly energetic live stage performances.

It's like Johnny Shines said of that earlier musical form, "The Blues come from right here in America. That is your American music and if you don't appreciate it, it's like a child being born, don't appreciate his mother." Many whites who appreciated the music and musicians brought to them are currently like the child who has forgotten his mother. This cultural severance causes malady. But at that time they came out Blacks, Whites, and others who preferred modernity in mass bases culture. The writer - dee jays provides additional insight as to Woods' business acumen when he says, "Busy Georgie Woods, handsome and energetic, was putting the finishing touches on another stage show by taking out a \$100,000 insurance policy on his performance."

Continuing Dixon states, "Georgie is referred to as the King of Rock and Roll... Long before other dee jays hopped on the band wagon, Georgie had anticipated the coming musical fad and he got way out front... He's been there ever since in the Rock and Roll firmament..."

The first national feature length article on Georgie Woods appeared in *OUR WORLD*, November 1955. It includes not only a graphic account of his activities at that time but also excellent photographs further illuminating the text.

Black Origins of Rock and Roll

When asked to explain what Rock and Roll is, Woods exclaimed, "It's a bomb exploding inside of you. **It's not new.** I got the idea from a 1936 recording called, 'Rock and Roll' by Hot Lips Page." Interestingly, the years of that recording coincides with the Woods family's move to Harlem.

Our World says, "Around this bit of rock and roll controversy is the basic issue of rock n' roll itself. Distraught white mothers, watching their teenage daughters writhe to 'Rock Around the Clock' and titillate over a score of undulating Negro Quartets ask,

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‘What is rock and roll?’

Many black music lovers asked the same question because before Alan Freed and others began to popularize an old Hot Lips Page term, they knew this much as Rhythm and Blues and Jazz. In fact all one has to do is look at an Alan Freed line up of talent, for his first *Rock and Roll Show* in New York to see how decidedly Black these musicians were. This is before Elvis Presley or Bill Haley were held as Rock & Robbers. An objective analysis of the emerging new musical craze reveals that all it is, is African American expressive music at its fullest. Although Georgie Woods and Jocko had had shows prior to Freed's New York Stage debut, white courtiers and some blacks as well, continue to propagate the myth that it is a white musical form with some black influences. What evolved over time is something else. Let us look at what Alan Freed presented to a New York audience as his first Rock & Roll Show.

Alan Freed's 1st Rock & Roll Show - All Black

The following account is most revealing:

“Deejay Alan Freed's first ‘Rock n’ Roll Ball’ in this city was a complete sell out for both nights at the St. Nicholas Arena, with a gross of over \$24,000 in the till two days before the first dance (January 14th, 1955), no tickets were sold at the door.

This affair, like Freed's record-breaking dances in such cities as Cleveland and Akron, Ohio, as well as Newark, New Jersey featured only rhythm and blues talent. Freed, now with radio station WINS in this city, threw the ‘Rock n’ Roll’ dance two nights at the St. Nicholas Arena because the place only holds 6,000 people, and he could not obtain a larger auditorium.

All tickets were sold either by mail order or over the counters of 16 record stores in the metropolitan area. All advertising was done by Freed on his early and late shows over WINS, except for about 250 window posters placed in record shops. There was also a mailing mode to members of Freed's ‘Rock n’ Roll Club.’

About 70 percent of the tickets were sold through the record

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shops, and the other 30 percent via mail. In addition to the \$24,000 general admission collected in advance - at \$2 per ticket, another \$3,500 was collected for reserved seats, making a total gross of about \$27,500 before taxes.

Singers, groups and others that were on the program of the two dances included: Joe Turner, Fats Domino, The Clovers, Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters, Danny Overbea, the Moonglows, the Harplones, the Buddy Johnson Orchestra, Ella Johnson, Nolan Lewis and the Red Prysoe Orchestra."

Ironically, Freed had only been in New York a short time before he gave this Rock n' Roll show at a time when Georgie Woods was making a mere \$25.00 per week at WHAT radio. Alan Freed reportedly received \$75,000 annually. According to an account from that time, "Although the deal involves perhaps the largest sum of money ever paid to a rhythm and blues jockey by an independent radio station, it does not presage any change in WINS programming policy. However, it will give the local outlet one of the country's strongest R & B wax spinners."

So it was the rhythm and blues music that gave Freed a point of entry into the lucrative New York market. Moreover, by syndicating the program he was able to garnish additional revenue.

In reading newspaper accounts of the time, one might note that the same kind of media hysteria created around rap concerts prevailed during the 1950's rock period.

Woods recognized that the Rock Revolution had the potential of reaching a substantial youth market across gender, racial and geographical lines. One account notes, "George's gimmick on his two year old WHAT record show is too short, weep and moan while a record plays." Woods said at the time Rock n' Roll has something for everybody. "More whites than colored listen to my radio show." Although no listenership's study of WHAT'S audience has been located, Woods statement appears plausible without a doubt he had a large listenership. He was receiving 400 calls a night. Woods popularity grew so rapidly he became an authentic folk hero, a mere two years after having arrived in this city. News accounts read, "Storm signals are up in deejay land. The high priests of the platters are on the alert to the new and furious

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tempest, brewing out Philly way, named George Woods. Glib, pretty boy George first showed that he was out to cop the deejay crown by packing 4500 screaming teenagers into Philly's Met last spring. Other deejays really sat up and took notice when he repeated the same thing last June and packed Philly's Arena with 6300, not letting up the pressure Georgie will break loud and strong this fall with another rock n' roll blowout. Is he a threat to New York's entrenched rock n' roller, Alan Freed? Does a Dr. Jive have to look to his laurels? Is Georgie slated to bestride deejay world like a colossus?"

All around the country people were beginning to see Georgie as the King of Rock and Roll promoters. Everybody began to pay attention. His audiences went from 3-4,000 to nearly 7,000 and in a few years after he began he was able to attract an audience of 60,000 over a ten day period.

1955 was a very active year for Woods. He had not only settled in Philly but this community had claimed him as one of their own. By May, 1955 Ann Logan and Joseph J. Cronin- Co. Leaders of the North Philadelphia Area, NAACP Membership Campaign were enlisting Georgie's support. "We are asking you to 'adopt' the North Philadelphia Area during our 'Membership Drive Caravan: We will begin this Caravan on Saturday May 7, with a door to door solicitation of the 11th & Norris Street and it is our hope that you might be able to announce our arrival in each area."

This request came a few days after Woods' successful 'Rock and Roll Show of 55, featuring: Varetta Dillard (whose tribute to the late great Johnny Ace, 'Johnny Has Gone' was hot), Gene and Eunice (You And Me - Savoy Label), Little Walter (Roller Coaster) and the famous Buddy Johnny Orchestra. (April 29, 1955)

Jocko provides 1st Promotion Experience

George recalls his very first promotion of a show. "It was 1953 up at the Town Hall. We had a group on there called the Velvettes and the Johnny Sparrows Band. We charged them \$1.50 to get in. That was the first experience I had with promotion. Me and

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Jocko did that. I didn't make any money. Jocko took all the money but he gave me \$90 for it, we had a packed house. But I didn't know the difference. Two days later he had a new car. I could never forget that. It was a good experience for me. He and Georgia were counting the money and I was on the stage." This was during the period when they both worked at WHAT.

George describes this period in the following manner, "You couldn't hardly get in the Academy. The first show may have been 1953 or 1954. I remember the date April 19th. First we developed the record hops and that developed into one night of dancing. We did dances basically. And from the dances we developed into doing a show... We did that show at the Nixon. We did shows at the Met. Broad and Poplar. At the Arena. Wherever we could get a building. But it wasn't something that you did right away like that. You had to grow into it."

When asked how he was able to attract such noted talent as a promoter with only a few stage shows under his belt. George explained, "If you broke the record, it was an unwritten rule that if you broke the record in Philadelphia the entertainer would come and work for you. That's the way it worked. It wasn't blackmail or anything like that. It was just one hand washes the other. We got them very reasonable because we made them popular so to speak. No one would have ever heard of these people if we had not put them on the radio. They would still be in obscurity. So that's the way that worked."

Day by day, concert by concert, the name Georgie Woods was becoming LARGE. Apparently, his success as a disc jockey and promoter did nothing to enhance his position at the radio station. At the very height of his popularity as a WHAT Disc Jockey, the relationship was severed. One Newspaper headline read, "Idol of Bobby Sox Fired from Station; He Claims He Quits." Let us turn to the story from October, 1955. It read, in part, "Hamdsome, debonair George Woods, celebrated disc jockey and idol of the Bobby Sox brigade, is the second popular record spinner to leave Station WHAT under a cloud of mystery. The first was Douglas 'Jocko' Henderson, who is currently connected with Station WDAS. Miss Dolly Banks, manager of Station WHAT, said

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Woods was fired, but Woods said, "This is America and a man does not have to sign anything if he doesn't want to."

The story continues, "Miss Banks said Woods' spot from 9pm to 1am each night had been filled by a new find, Charlie Jeter, of Trenton, New Jersey, whom she says is very sweet and very cooperative!

Woods had been with the station for two years. His salary was not released by the manager who said they would rather not give it out! During the two year period, Woods had one break, when differences occurred between him and another disc jockey, who has since gone to a Rival Station. Shortly after that dj changed stations, Woods was brought back to WHAT.

Woods well known 'Rock and Roll' shows, both on the air and in auditoriums throughout the city, have been big drawing cards, with hundreds of teenagers. Storming the doors to participate in the 'jam' gathering held at each concert.

The disc jockey with whom Woods had the difference of opinion was 'Jocko' Henderson. Some say that Henderson lost popularity as a result of leaving WHAT, others say he gained added stature by associating with Station WDAS. A long - standing feud had existed between the two handsome disc jockeys who had also been rivals for the handsomest and best dressed man honors in the airwaves fields.

The Rock N' Roll shows which became so popular throughout the country again became a 'bone of contention' between the two dj's. Jocko insists that he was the first to start playing rhythm and blues recordings which hit the air lanes with a loud noise and finally hit the jack pot for recording companies.

Miss Banks talked about Woods' indiscriminate use of the STATION to advertise his personal Rock N' Roll shows at the expense of the Station. Workers at the Station refuse to talk about the change when questioned by reporters. However, Miss Banks pointed out that Woods had arguments with most of the station's personnel. In connection with the personal shows of Woods, Miss Banks played him declaring that "People thought WHAT was giving their inventory away."

George's explanation at the time, differed markedly from

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Dolly Bank's rather lengthy comments. Woods' argued that he had severed his relationship with the Station because the new contract preferred by Banks was neither fan of human. Three weeks of negotiations resulted in an compass and a decision not to sign. At the time Woods stated, "As far as my being fired by Miss Banks is concerned, it's not true. She did not fire me. She begged me to sign the new contract. I have a contract to show that I was not fired and I am willing to show it to anyone, if necessary, to prove what I say was true."

Woods continued, "She refused to give out my salary probably because she was ashamed to let the public know how little she pays disc jockeys." He added, "There is a rumor that Miss Banks is planning to sue me. Well, let her go right ahead when she gets ready. She can't get anything... **I Worked for her for five years.**"

Recently, Woods elaborated on this event of some thirty five years prior . He said, "She didn't want to pay me anything. She was typical. People like her don't like to pay. They were doing a lot of exploiting at that time. Most of those people had gotten filthy rich off the backs of black people. She was one of those who did just that. And they used our talent and our ability to send their kids to school and college. They lived on the mainline in big houses. We didn't have hardly anything to eat. I could hardly pay to get to work. She was only paying me \$50 a week. The other stations gave me \$75, so I went to work for them."

Continuing to describe his experiences with the Station manager at WHAT, Woods says, "Dolly Banks was a bitch, period. I chased her down Walnut Street one day. She called Police Commissioner Gibbons. She told him I was a shell shocked veteran who lost my mind. That's what she told the cops. The cops came after me on Walnut....I'm chasing this woman up Walnut Street because it's 5' o'clock in the afternoon. She was going crazy. People thought I was trying to rape this woman or something. She had said something that had insulted me, and her nephew, Lenny Stevens, wouldn't even defend his own Aunt. So the police commissioner came.... "I said, I'm a World War II Veteran how are you going to put me in jail?" At that time everybody was coming

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back from Korea. He said you can't do this to a Veteran, you should be glad to have a Veteran...So they didn't do nothing. To put a Veteran in jail who came back home shell shocked so to speak? You had to respect them a little bit. So he said go ahead... I left the station and went to New York. That's when I left... Well, it was a long time ago and I think it was a ball game of something in New York. I still liked the Yankees. That was '54 or '55 [Oct. 1955]. It was just a lot of conflicts. A lot of confusion there... And don't ask for a raise. You'd have to wait two weeks to see her before you could ask for a raise."

George felt that the conditions at the station were beyond reproach. Like many other black disc jockeys before and after him, he exercised the limited options available to him. The station contract had a three month stipulation that forbade him from taking a job in Philadelphia within a 90 day period.

Off to New York George went. But these were not idol days there. It was during this period that he put together a major show. He was not going out like that. For nearly three years Woods had spent countless hours building up a massive-following. He felt it beneath his dignity to beg for a job at WHAT, when it was advertising revenue generated from his show that helped to keep the station afloat. What is most interesting about the Georgie Woods of that time is that he had already developed a tremendous degree of tenacity. This man had crazy stamina. Determined. Stubborn like a bull. Taurus born black man like Stevie Wonder, Louis Farrakhan and Malcolm X. Nothing about the back up. Straight ahead movement: Stepping. Climbing. Fighting. He was not to be outdone. This man realized the value of his name in the market place. Why else would he risk promoting a show without a daily radio program to reach his listeners?

Big Shows at the Mastbaum Theater

At that time it cost about \$5,000 to rent the Mastbaum Theater for one week's rent. He was going to bring an exciting show to Philly town. Soon after he arrived back in the city, 'Screaming Jay Hawkins had a startling and highly successful engagement at New

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York's Apollo Theatre': George decided to bring 'Screaming Jay' to Philly. He was coming back to Philly for a 6-day monster Rock and Roll show. Check out the line-up: Lavern Baker, the El Dorados, the Valentines, Red Prysock, Bubler Johnson and others.

His choice of venues was unique. This time Georgie Woods was bringing his Rock and Roll Show to the old Mastbaum Theatre at 20th and Market Street. It had been built at a cost of \$5.5 million between 1927 and 1929. A memorial to Jules Mastbaum, the theatrical magnate who died before its completion. With 5,000 seats it was one of the world's largest at the time it was built. Grain matched Boltichini and Obreachetta marble, imported from Italy, and twenty two carat gold leaf decorated the lobby and ceilings. Johnson had made an appearance there prior to the Depression and a subsequent dispute with the musicians union led to its temporary closing. It never quite fulfilled the dream of Mastbaum or any of the many managers who tried to make it work. The dome-shapped hall seemed to have doomed. But not before the Rock and Roll Impression, Georgie Woods, graced the stage.

The day after Woods opened, the press reported, "At the first show yesterday, A small audience gave the performers a cool reception, due primarily to the whistling microphone system which made everyone sound like a scratchy record. However the entertainers enthusiasm did not appear to be dampered by the poor response."

Screaming Jay Hawkins And Laverne Baker

The journalist, Barbara Wilson, goes on to say, "Starting off the show are the Eldorados, featuring a soloist and four choirsters who offered, "Knock, Knock, Knockin," and their latest recording, "I'll Be Forever Loving You." Philadelphia vocalist, Gloria Mann follows with those numbers including versions of our popular discs, 'Earth Angel' and 'Teenage Prayer.' Other performers are Bubler Johnson, the Valentines and Screaming Jay Hawkins appeared in a striking green suit. Hawkins finally livens the proceedings with his screeching arrangement of 'Ko-Ko-Mo.'"

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Following him is Laverne Baker offering 'Play It Fair', 'Tweedle Dee' and 'All Of Me', the latter bearing little resemblance to the rendition part Helen O'Connell used to give with the Jimmy Dorsey band when they were welcome items on local stages... Rounding out the show is the popular group, the Four Lads singing 'Moments to Remember', 'Pledging My Love', 'Jubilee' and 'Melancholy Baby'. One reporter observed, "The theatre jumped like mad and would be imitators only made big ardent and devoted fans to bide their time until his return."

With the Mastbaum show behind him and the three month period of gestation just about over, Woods prepared to return to the Philly Airwaves. Relaxed. Rejuvenated. Re-Staging. Redirecting. Memories. Destinies. Discoveries. All had taken place within a 90 day period. Was his 90 days off as hard for George as it was later to be for Malcolm X? Did he doubt whether he could recapture the thrones of young people waiting to hear his every word? Would the Sycamores, 'I'll Be Waiting' be more appropriate than The Diablos, 'The Way You Dog Me Around'.

To WDAS

Ceremonial Improvisatory: The reenactment of a ritual. Back In Stride Again. George, recalls receiving a call from Bob Klein, General Manager of WDAS while still in New York City. "I think I was at the World Series and something happened at 'DAS and they called me and made an announcement over the speakers to come and talk with them. Something like that happened." Had George already demonstrated his strength in the market place? Do you recall the time he decided to play an almost forgotten Johnny Otis tune, 'Mambo Boogie'? Did not Nelson Verbit of Martnell Distributors call Savoy Records for a new release to meet the demands of hundreds of calls. WDAS' management realized that Georgie Woods had a tremendously loyal listenership which translates to revenue=mo' money.

One headline read "Georgie Woods, Rock and Roll King back on Air." The body after this article contained several acute observations, "A likable champ whose record spinning success has

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reaped his clubs among racial groups, it's Woods, gimmicks with the cowbells, whistles, singing as the records play, an occasional yell, moan or groan and his pleasant voice that scored with his listeners young and old"... more than 15,000 youngsters of every race, color and creed have rubbed shoulders, dances, rocked and rolled at a Woods promotion. Top recording artists in the field have expressed their gratefulness to Woods in popularizing the present musical fad and pushing them up the ladder of success. Finally, it is noted, 'Woods' popularity is evidenced by the number of invitations he received to appear at the mike. Now Woods could be found at the mike - WDAS in Philly town.

There the traveller nests Aghast
Sheeted memories of the past
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
as they pass the wanderer by -
white-robed forms of friends long given
In agony, to the Earth and Heaven.

Like the poet, Edgar Allan Poe, Woods was to encounter 'Sheeted memories of the past' as well as 'Shrouded forms that start and sigh.' By 1956, WDAS was well on its way toward building full pledged black formatted programming. And George was to do much to help it achieve its goal.

Ironically, the candy manufacturer and semi-professional musician, Max Leon purchased WDAS AM & FM for \$500,000 from William Goldman Theatres, Inc., in 1950, the same year George went to Chicago pursuing an opportunity in Radio. I wonder if Woods had tasted one of Leon's Products - the marsh-mellow syrup used in chocolate marshmellow ice cream. Had he seen him conduct one of his Saturday morning concerts? Did he realize that Leon had founded the Philadelphia Pops Orchestra? Was there a clue in the name of his candy manufacturing form - 'Whole-Sum'? Born in Cholm, Poland, Max came to the U.S.A. at age 16, George to the U.S. Navy at ?? Beyond that there may have not been very much the WDAS Station owner shared with his young, popular employee. Immigrant. Poland to Philly. Migrant. Georgia to New York.

Desolate yet all undaunted

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Determined to kick it alive at WDAS, Georgie Woods came ready to work. By the time he arrived there in 1956, WDAS was significantly different from what it had been at the beginning of the 1950's. Bob Klein, the son in-law of Max Leon and the Stations general manager at that time, sheds considerable light on management's thinking in 1950.

Q: What was the format like when you came aboard?

Klein: Well, it was a real mix.

Q: Did you have black dj's at that time?

Klein: There was one at the time. It was Randy Dixon. Randy was there at the beginning. The rest of the Station was a real hodgepodge. There was pop music from whatever was going on at that time. There was foreign language programs. Randy was on at night.

Q: So there wasn't an all black format at the beginning?

Klein: No, I think I did that. I did that meaning, I changed it. I changed it over to a black format.

Q: Why?

Klein: Because when I went into the market, it was a time when T.V. was supposed to have a terrific impact on radio and so forth... There were a couple of reasons I did it. I looked at the demographics, the numbers and I saw that blacks were increasing at a terrific rate. And they didn't have the representation. I always had a feeling about trying to do something in that area anyway.

Q: In what area?

Klein: In black/white relationships.

Q: Why?

Klein: Well, When I was a kid I went to a school with a lot of black guys. So I had a kind of feeling for it. So I gradually transformed that station and put together new guys like [Jim] Clark. I brought all of them in. I mean every one of them. I started with Randy and everybody after that. Because I said once the Civil Rights thing got rolling we really had a thing to go for. And people like Georgie Woods were very active in that.

When asked if there were any black marketing firms, black professional consultants - who assisted at the time, Klein responded, "There was one firm that I got early on. I think his name

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was Fitz Simmons. He helped me a great deal in doing work on the census and demographics and trying to understand that. He was a black guy out of New York. Fitz Simmons was his name and he was very sharp. I got a sense of the technical demographics from him. I translated it into, these are the people, here they are and here we are. I can't overemphasize to you the importance of the whole thrust of the black community coming together and going for what should have been theirs a long time ago. There was a very strong engine that drove the Station... to get what they should have had without question and my estimation what I thought was key in the Civil Rights Movement with people like King. What I tried to do was to say, in effect, this is what you say you're about. And the black people have said that that's what we want you to be about. We want you to see your reflection as you are but [also] as you should be, with the best ideas and the best spirit of what the country is capable of being. So, in effect, they held a mirror up. I always thought they were holding a mirror up to the white community, saying, "Be your best, do your best. We're running up and down and we're trying to tell you something. We believe in it too. Now the only way you're going to show us and the world, and most important yourself that you believe in it is when you do something about it. Do something! Fundamentally, I would say that was one of my guiding concepts."

Bob Klein has spoken forcefully on what his philosophy of black radio programming became over time. Clearly, a part of his evolved state of consciousness is due to the interaction with man communicators like Georgie Woods. That is what made WDAS stand out in the Civil Rights era. We must be cognizant that Georgie Woods joined WDAS' staff less than two months from the day Rosa Parks refused to move back on a crowded city bus so that a white passenger could take her place.

This event resurrected in Woods, a memory of the conditions that prevailed for him and his people while he grew up in rural Georgia. The Emmitt Till murder case had happened less than a year. The 1950's was a decade that gave rise to the military of the 1960's. Black oriented radio's assisted in this process as Klein rightly asserted. They also profited from the 'social' and (in

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reality) broadcast function. They were legally mandated to service the population for whom their manager was being developed.

Prof. William Barlow of Howard University's School of Communicators writes the following in, *Split Image: African Americans in the Mass Media*: "The first radio stations to devote their entire formats to black oriented programming were also owned and managed by white entrepreneurs. They directed specially tailored radio shows and advertising messages toward the African Americans located within the range of their broadcasting signal. By the late 1940's that audience of fifteen million people was being heraldic in trade magazines like *Sponsor* (October, 1949) as a lucrative 'New Negro market'. There were three principal factors involved in the sudden emergence of this market. (1) The Urban migration of African-Americans was relocating them in the major metropolitan radio markets. (2) Education and income levels among African-Americans were on the rise, as were the numbers of African Americans who owned radio receivers. (3) At the same time, commercial radio was facing black economic prospects due to the arrival of television. Given this situation a number of radio station owners began to cultivate the new black urban market in order to avoid going out of business."

These considerations were not unknown by George. He realized that with a large listenership he could address a number of inequities. This he did without haste. It was for him, an evolved and involved process, "My work experience has been one of, I guess you call it, in between... you know, you work, you earn a living. But then you start thinking about trying to make something right. So you forget all about trying to make a living. In the end you are out there trying to just change things and make it right."

Wood's Social Character

In examining Georgie Woods' social character, one finds fundamental agreement with Erich Fromm's notions on the subject, **It is not something one possesses, it is something one is.** Fromm argued as early as 1929, "These people do not have an individual psyche that functions when the person acts as an



Leandre Jackson Photo

*On Stage
He Changes*

*This Stage
He Watches
George and
Goldie Watson,
Deputy Mayor*



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., P.A

*Center Stage
George is
applauded
by a New
Intruder*



Leandre Jackson Photo



Courtesy George Woods Collection

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Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

individual...and an adjacent but separate collective psyche endowed with vague attributes such as community feeling, solidarity, or man instinct, which springs into action when the individual acts as part of the collective...There are not two souls in the human breast, but one, in which the same mechanisms and laws obtain." Woods not only recognized that the society he lived in during the 1950's and 60's was in need of changes, he also realized that he could not fulfill his genuine personhood, without those changes. George realized this at a time when many of his colleagues and friends did not. Often it was the young who took his message to heart.

One of the many individuals who grew up listening to George is John Braxton, now a judge. "I was born and raised in Philadelphia. I'm now 47 years of age. George was on the radio when I was a teenager. I listened to him as I went to Sayre Junior High and Overbrook High School. He was my man...One of my real heroes or warriors. He was out there trying to make sure that Blacks got an opportunity. I learned that if you want your rights, you've got to go out and fight for them...because no one is going to give them to you without a struggle. Georgie is one of the people who made a contribution to the city and we ought to document it...What he did was to demonstrate that no matter where you are, you can do something for your community and at the same time you could do something for yourself...George's audience is a committed audience. They love the man. That's part of what happens when they see your personality, people can identify with your good qualities. That is what happens when you take yourself out into the community and come from behind your mic and let people see that you're real, you're not some superstar from afar, you're a man that was born and raised in the black community and sensitized to the problems that face it."

Early on Georgie's audience detected that he was real and that he was genuinely concerned about the problems facing 'Their' respective communities. Additionally he had the audacity to stand up and defend rock and roll music. Now Judge Braxton recalls, "I remember the days when George had to defend Rock and Roll. Because there were some people in this town that said Rock and

STAGES

Roll had to go. Some of them were holy rollers saying something was wrong with it. I think they're the same people who are saying there is something wrong with rap...I'm proud to say that I modeled myself and did the things that he said we could do and I'm going to keep striving to do those things in the future...He stood up with Cecil Moore to make sure that you and I would have out fair place in this town."

Conditions at That Time

Toward the end of the 1950's, many blacks in Philadelphia became impatient with the wait to receive their rights. The Executive Secretary of the NAACP at that time was Charles A. Shorter. He said, "Today, the possibility of obtaining a Negro representative on the U.S. Congress and a judge in the Common Pleas Court is greater than ever before...It is my observation that the Negro has reached a point in Philadelphia's history where he must demonstrate unity, as a group. He has reached a point where he must be more vocal in demanding those things which are rightfully his."

Daily the black air waves were hearing with Woods' Rock n' Roll show on WDAS and Reggie Lavong's 'Snap Club' announcing itself as Philadelphia's top rated afternoon Rock n' Roll show on WHAT. Soon to be replaced by Bill Curtis. By this time Jocko Henderson had launched his mighty Rocket Ship Show on New York's radio station WOL and negotiating a daily TV show on WATV. A young attorney by the name of Cecil B. Moore was busy preparing to defend Billie Holliday and her husband Louis McKay 'on charges of possession of narcotics and a pistol'. It wasn't long before Elder Richard, Bluesman Kae Williams, a WDAS disc jockey was doing shows with Little Junior Parker ('That's All Right') and Bobby Blue Bland ('Further Up The Lane') over at the Tipper Inn Cafe in Berlin, New Jersey. Kae Williams had shepherded the Silhouettes to the no 1 slot with their recording of 'Get A Job'.

It wasn't long before the 'Silhouettes' would have a job on the stage of Woods' show, but for the moment Woods was busying

himself with a national craze called the record Hop. One account from the late 1950's noted that he would sign up to 500 autographs per appearance at the weekly parties. An account from that time notes, Roller skating hops have become the newest fad with a big segment of teenagers, thanks to the personal magnetism and untiring efforts of disc-jockey Georgie Woods (WDAS) idol of the area's adolescents.

The wholesome outlet for the young ones, has won for Woods the commendations of parents, groups, ministers and even school and city juvenile authorities. When asked his expression, why he succeeded with young people where others failed? Woods exclaimed, "Give them what they want and a chance to let off pent up emotions of steam in a wholesome manner". At that time the champs at the Elmwood Skating Rink were Norman Ricks, Betty Richburg, Alice Lewis and Robert Perry.

It was Woods who could reach the young, and the restless. He played the music that shaped the cultural contours. In order to more fully understand the decade of the 1950's in relationship to the black community of Philadelphia and other similarly situated urban residential centers inhabited by blacks, why not listen to the urban planner, Peter LaBrie's assessment "The black world has changed dramatically since before World War II, That it would be impossible for a youth coming up today to have the same view of the world and himself, which his father had. In the turbulent lawless cities of America, the rythm of life is quicker and more varied and complex for the masses. Life becomes a game in which one has to learn at an early age to be flexible, to scheme and hustle if he is to surviv. Use or be used. Stay one up on people or they'll take advantage of you ." It took considerable skills for black people to master their living environment in the post-Korean era. Part of what kept them going was the music.

The writer, Larry Neal described how the Blues ethos helped to sustain blacks during a strenuous period, "The Singer is aware that his audience has been through the same changes as he has. His task is to express through his craft their suffering and his. Everything and everyone who he encounters on his journey of the soul is movement in his art. He is appreciated as a meaningful member

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of the community to the degree to which he expresses the conscious and unconscious spirit of that community” Defiance. Resurrection. Cultural Ambience. Core resolution that is what Blues and Rhythm and Blues music meant to Blacks in the hood Woods played the music of his period 1950's and 1960's. Stages. Stages and more Stages.



GEORGIE WOODS

By Del Shields

On the morning of Saturday, February 23, 1983, the quiet serenity of thousands of Philadelphia homes was disturbed by the shocking news in a bulletin that interrupted the "Late Late" Show that "Georgie Woods, popular disc jockey, had been involved in an automobile accident, and was in serious condition in Germantown Hospital."

Following the news, a pall of gloom blanketed the city of Philadelphia, for many felt that the cause of freedom would suffer an irreparable loss if the voice of Georgie Woods was to be stifled.

Within a matter of hours, the switchboard of the Germantown Hospital lit up like the lights on Broadway. The hospital, nestled in the Germantown section of the city, was completely unprepared for the series of events that was to follow, or for the hundreds of well-wishers who wanted to see their "Georgie".



Gilda Woods

Georgie's entry to the hospital was really the longest day I have ever spent. Georgie's devoted wife, Gilda—who maintained a twenty-four hour vigil at the hospital and helped to continue the tradition that in times of tragedy American women are made of—a rare combination of guts, forbearance, and unselfish devotion to their men—was on the verge of collapse herself, but she never faltered.

I watched her during the early hours when the doctors were attempting to diagnose the extent of the injuries, as George lay helpless, his bandages saturated with blood from the severe cuts on his head. She stood quietly by, crying inwardly, but moving quickly as she took charge of the many details.

Throughout the city, Georgie's close friends, his business associates, WDAS, the Philadelphia Tribune and others were besieged with calls. Wherever his fans felt they could glean some information about Georgie's condition, a call was placed.

News travels fast. Before the completion of the twenty-four hour period, many of the stars in show business began to put in long distance calls. They too, were concerned about Georgie Woods.



Brook Benton



"Moms" Mabley

There was a tearful Brook Benton, who long distanced from New York, and begged to say just a few words to Georgie. Jackie "Moms" Mabley, upon learning the news, was so emotionally upset that she could not continue her conversation and parted by saying "Tell my son, Georgie; Moms will be there tomorrow". True to

minute performance in Room 107 that the hospital will never be the same. There was Jerry Cecil Moore who upset the tranquility of the sedate hospital when he was refused admission after visiting hours to see his boy.

Calls—calls—calls throughout Sunday and Monday. The condition of George Woods was of vital concern to all of Philadelphia. And with his condition were the inquiries of "What will happen to the Freedom Show?"—the same show you are about to see. There was no doubt that in the tradition of show biz, the show would go on. This, we know, is what George would have wanted.

It is difficult to measure a man's profound effect on people. Although, in the past two years, there has been a changing picture of the George Woods image, which has broadened from the successful "King of Rock and Roll" to the serious dedicated and active civil rights fighter, the seeds had been planted a long time ago.

In his way, Georgie has always fought the fight of justice and freedom. In many areas never publicized and during the period when he was the subject of inverse criticism from the members of the black bourgeoisie, George was uncompromising in his stand for equality and aided countless causes.

It is perhaps this quality of stern belief and rugged individualism plus the prayers of thousands that rallied George during that twenty-four hour period.

Tonight's "Freedom Show of '84" is another page in George Woods' contribution to freedom. The cost of freedom is high. But the cost of lives unable to enjoy or participate in freedom is higher. The following charities will share the proceeds from tonight's "Freedom Show '84": Philadelphia Branch, NAACP; Cecil B. Moore, Esq., President, Opportunities Industrialization; Rev. Leon L. Sullivan; Philadelphia Tribune Charities; E. Washington Rhodes, Esq.; WDAS Charities; Joseph H. Rainey, Executive Director.

Hearing a Symphony

Courtesy George Woods Collection



THE SUPREMES
Motown Recording Artists

Direction:
International Talent Management, Inc. (ITM)
Detroit 8, Michigan

**In the Early Days the Supremes found
a Pyramid and sang Love Songs. Deep. Dark.
Distant. Feeling Songs. So Classic. Stylized.
Baby Love...But...
Where Did Our Love Go?**

Uptown

It is 6:60 p.m., just about 7:00. The crowd winds around the Avenue like the prayer band at Mother Dabney's Garden of Prayer. They are here this evening to be resuscitated. Old and young, short and tall, wide and round, man, woman and child. Standing in line. They are all gathered at this sacred place, this special moment in time.

Summertime and the streets are hot. It must have been that August show just before Labor Day. Labov knows nothing of this language/lore, nor does Abe. Holidays at the Uptown. Where else could you take your lady without spending an arm and a leg? Shake a leg if you can. Faye Adams or was it Laverne Baker? Way back history. All around this theater are people. Sun kissed people linked to a yesterfuture. Uptown. And Downtown, too when they got an opportunity. The 20th and Federal crew, 19th and Bainbridge folk all came uptown. There is something madly magic about these streets of North Philly. Iridescent suits. Black cadillacs before the B.M.W. (black man's wheels) became popular. Like the Coasters and the Isley Brothers there was a real thing for those cool aid colors...What makes the niggah sing like that?

The stage. Empowering. Staging the world famous show at the Uptown. Not talking about the Nixon, Mastbaum, State, Howard or the Pearl. Uptown. Up. Town. The slickest part of this town, North Philly is the heart and soul of this city. Before Bilaaly B. Before Cash Money there was the bell ringing, shout and holler, screaming and screening possee jumping off in the north. Subways and summertime. All the dances and dancers. Armand. Who was the old white kid who used to dance alone on the stage? What row did Brick sit in? And there were the Tucker sisters from Sydenham Street. Bernice and her sister Shirley were staying up on Fifth Street. And who was the bb girl who used to stand near the stage waiting for Smokey?

The city was all geared up for the Motown or did they call it Motortown Revue that Georgie brought to the Uptown? No it wasn't the Susquehanna Avenue stop, it was the Clinton and

Georgie and the Uptown

Washington stop in Brooklyn. But one night when Stevie Wonder was playing the Uptown. Naw, it wasn't the Uptown. It was the Spectrum? Man, you gonna let me tell the story or do you want to ride the smoke? I was saying, one time when the lines were all the way around 25th and Diamond, I heard the Guy With The Goods say. 'Hey, y'all. How's everybody? This is the Guy with the Goods, Georgie Woods.' Naw man that was the time he had Sammy Davis giving a benefit for the Moroccans. The Moroccans? No. The Moroccos or was it the Demarcos? The Valley? No, if it had been the Valley you would have known it. Curt's father used to be active in the Forty Thieves even before Georgie came to town, and years before Brock came through.

Even before there was Kenny Gamble and the Romeos and even before there was a Philadelphia International Records there was a Georgie Woods and an Uptown. Gamble recently reflected on those days in his moving introduction to Georgie Woods' forthcoming biography - *I'm Only A Man* (scheduled for release before the end of the summer '92). "The show that I remember most at the Uptown was a show that had everybody on it. It had the Temptations. It was the first time I saw the Temptations and The Four Tops and Smokey and the Miracles and Martha and the Vandells. It was the Motortown Revue that was there. Georgie had brought that there. I stayed all day long. I couldn't leave. And they had maybe four or five shows a day. I got behind the stage because I was working back there, too. I used to get chicken sandwiches for them, you know; I was helping out. They used to give me little tips, \$4 or \$5. I used to go to Pearl's right across the street. I'd go get the chicken sandwiches for them. "Come back, I'd ask them, if anybody need me to do anything else."

Back and forth. From Miss Pearl's to the backstage of the Uptown. Up the street from Miss Pearl's is another neighbor who remembers. She recalls Herb Staton coming over to borrow the iron so that he could be sure that Georgie's suites were always pressed fresh. Herb was Georgie Woods' assistant at that time. It is important to remember that the Uptown Theatre was situated right on Broad Street in the middle of North Philly neighborhood that peopled all the hip, hilarious and heavy deep thinkers.

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Up the street was Muhammad's Mosque #12. It was located at Broad Street and Susquehanna Avenue over top the state store. How ironic. In this place was the strength of this community. You could say here was the backbone and the forebone. The heart and soul of a people lies in the cultural and religious centers. That is what made this community so strong, so safe in the early days. Sure there were gang wars but there was a strong sense of ethics in the gang banging community. You were challenged to a fair one. Rite of passage. These were the days when there was really a sense of community in and around the Uptown. Like I said the Mosque was on the corner and for some entertainers and show goers it was their first exposure to *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper and the powerful teaching of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. It wasn't long before you would see Otis Redding being interviewed for *The Speaks* and considering joining on to his lost-found nation. The same Joe Tex who used to appear on the stage of this theatre under the great maestro, Georgie Woods, was later to become a Minister named Yusef Hazziz. William, and Wilbert from the Delfonics would sport that gray Bentley with their star and crescent, Islamic gear, too. The manager, Stan Watson, would drive up in the red jag. These were some cold days and cold nights. Philly in the 60's and the 70's. Everybody went to the Uptown. That was the play. Do you remember another soul music/jazz group that fell under the influence of the Nation at that time? Kool and The Gang. Brother Ronald X Bell out of Jersey City, New Jersey. Now he would have been under the Son Of Thunder. That is the history coming out of just the evocation of a name, a place, a people and those the sun had blessed.

The block captain of the Blackhawker lived on Garnet Street. It was between 19th and 20th Streets, not far from the school. One time I remember those jitterbugs tried to snatch Mrs. Williams' pocketbook. But the block stood up. Wasn't nobody sitting on the porch. Mrs. Williams was the clean block captain of this city. Do you remember the pride people took in having those clean blocks. I'm talking about North Philly, partner.

At a time when young people of the era were 'discovering' themselves, Georgie Woods had already gone through the proc-

Georgie and the Uptown

ess. Or is it more accurate to say he was going to *process* through it? These were the days when Cecil B. Moore, Esq. was President of the NAACP and for all practical purposes, the G.D. Boss. Hadn't he already made that declaration in Time magazine. This was before the Time Band and the Prince Revolution. In fact the period we are talking about is when Jimi Hendrix was playing back-up guitar for the lead group among the Uptown performers.

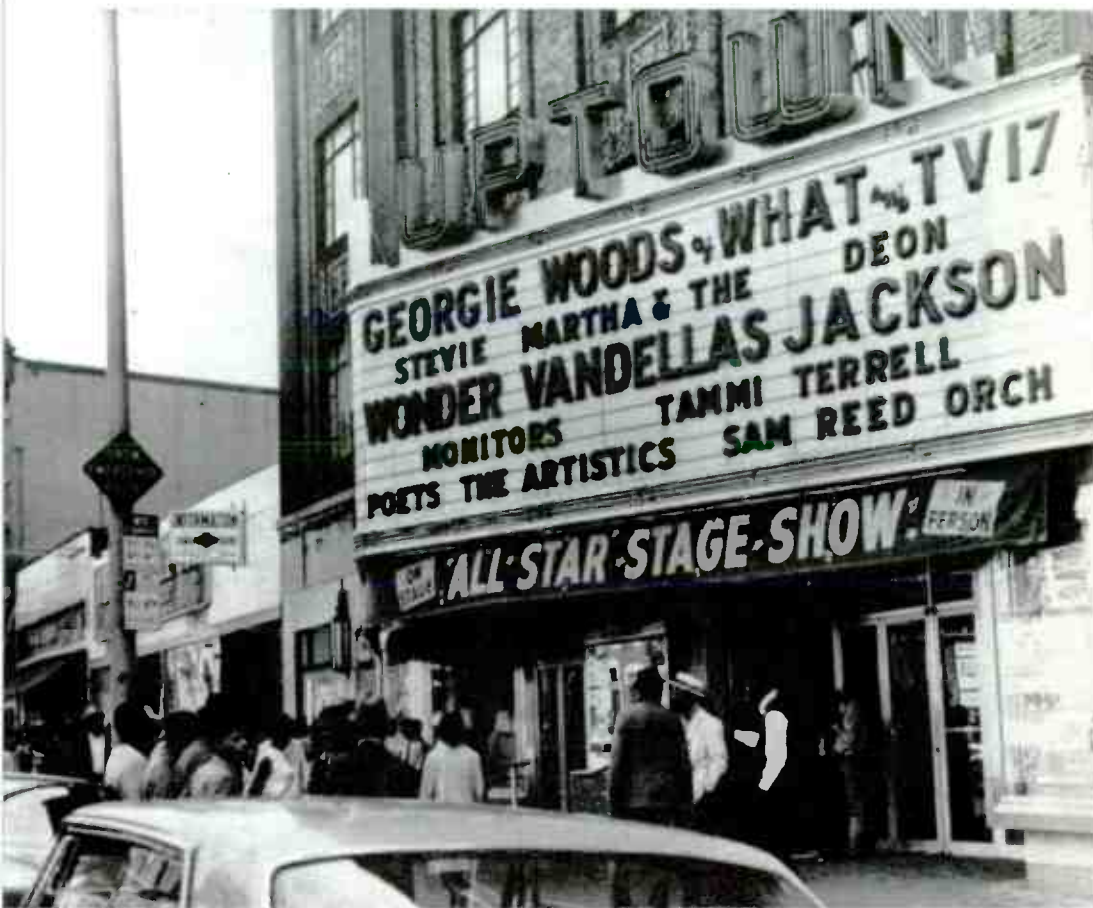
Talking about Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles even when they didn't have that name. Back in the days when Montague was still managing them. How things changed. It ain't funny how time just slipped away. What about the night when Ike and Tina Turner first hit the Uptown stage and Tina was showing it? Brothers went wild as she echoed the Mockingbirds. The closest recent similarity was the reaction in the quarter section when the new Peaches came out with Herb the other night. Memories and more memories....These were the days when the Uptown was the Uptown not an old tech or a petro tech. That's when they had the old school young manager named Sid Booker. He recalls, "If we had fights, Georgie and them never knew about it because you know why? We had the men on the floor and we ushered them out the side door so fast and once we took them to school and let them go, if they ever came back in there again you wouldn't even know they were there." And Sid was the manager, in charge, in effect.

Woods provides deep insight into the whole period when he was the King of Rock and Roll, Impressario of Rythm and Blues and Promoter of Soul Music. He discusses in candid terms his experiences as a pioneer concert promoter, his first co-promotion with Jocko, his involvement in the Philadelphia Civil Rights Movement with Cecil B. Moore, his days as talk radio host, his first plane ride - a gesture of appreciation from Nat King Cole, his support of Dr. Martin Luther King and the role he played in helping to get out the Malcolm X recording, the years of community activities, When asked if he felt that he had given too much time to the struggle for human dignity and respect for black people, George replied, "I don't think I gave too much time. I think it was necessary to do. What I was trying to do was two things: Number One, let people know that you could use the microphone

Uptown

**Midsixties at the Uptown
Life In the Heart of North Philly
And the music protects them**

**It's like a Heatwave
moving concentrically like a
Harmattan before the rainy season...**



Courtesy George Woods Collection

**These are styling people waiting to see on stage
In Person Tammi Terrell and Little Stevie Wonder
Wandering into another space and Time**

No Bar tonight. These are all Star People.



Leandre Jackson Photo

(l-r) Sidney Booker and Georgie Woods, 1992

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

to help straighten out a situation that's wrong or a condition that's bad, and also to the black disc jockey - disrespected totally - to give him something. To give them some dignity. Because we're not clowns and all of us didn't talk jive talk on the radio, and that's what they thought about the black disc jockey. So I tried to change all that by involving myself in the Civil Rights Movement and also politics.”

In an essay on ‘The Black Disc Jockey as a Cultural Hero’, One scholar noted, “Georgie Woods is to black radio in Philadelphia as the Liberty Bell is to Independence Hall: Both are symbols of freedom. Woods is a cultural hero in Philadelphia. He is recognized in this manner not only for his ability as a disc jockey, but for his commitment to the black community.”

Uptown/Downtown

In the city of Philadelphia, thousands of people remember Woods from his long tenure at the Uptown. There are others who recall attending shows he produced at the Arena, the Met, Town Hall and the Academy of Music. In later years, they remember his promotional activities with joy, although not always precise on the details.

Sid Booker and The Front Office

One of the best informed people on George's experiences at the Uptown is Sid Booker, who served as the Theatre's manager nearly the whole period of it's glory days. What follows is an unusual dialogue that goes far in reconstructing and deconstructing the Uptown days. S=Sid Booker. G= Georgie Woods.

Sid: I didn't take over until 1960, the last part of the year..

Q: When you came in did you have to make some changes? How was it being done when you got in there?

Georgie and the Uptown

S: I just tightened up the ship. I tightened up. Got rid of all the dead heads. Got rid of all the free loaders. Ran it like it should be ran. Not having 2100 seats with only 1500 in there paying admission and 600 friends and whoever they could let in and get a dollar from. All that shit was gone. When I took over all that shit went out the door.

Q: How did you stop it?

S: Just like anything. You come in, you walk around, you watch and see and then you weed out the bad ones. That's what you gotta do, and that's what I did. They called the owners and wanted to have a meeting with him, because they said I was too hard. I came in, I cut their overtime...No more fucking overtime. You can do this job in eight hours. Let's be fair about it. Now if you need an extra 2 hours to do it, o.k. take it. It's like this, you have to be a boss or win a popularity contest. I wasn't trying to win a popularity contest. I went there to do a job and that was it. All the passes they were giving out...

Q: What kind of passes were they giving out?

S: George would have passes he would give out to people, and I had so many passes and you never knew how many passes were given out. So we put them on a system. You had 50 passes and we got 50 passes, that's it. That's the total for the whole show.

Q: So you never went over 200 passes?

S: No, because you didn't need it. Because the simple reason was the shows were cheap to get in- \$2.50 a show, a \$1.50 a show, then you had a kiddie matinee, a 50 cent matinee on Friday's at three o'clock in the afternoon. We filled the place up with 2100 kids. 3 o'clock matinee, nobody could move in the place.

Q: How did you do it, Sid?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

S: We used to run those little talent shows at the Park Theatre, and the winner from the talent show George would put on the show. They'd make an appearance on the show. It was just a neighborhood talent show. He would let them know that he would put them on the show at the Uptown, and that was big, 'cause they were on with big names. But during those days the shows were cheap to get in. He had 50 cent kiddie matinees. You had \$1.50 early shows. You even had midnight shows for \$2.50 at one time. \$2.00 dollars and then \$2.50. Then we had ten groups on the show. *Ten groups on the show*. The biggest show I can remember was the battle between the Temptations and the Vibrations, and the Four Tops if I'm not mistaken. Remember we had Broad Street so tied up, and Rizzo came on the scene that night. That show was so big it was unreal. We even thought about holding the show over. It was so big. I don't think there was no show bigger than that one.

Georgie: The battle of the groups.

S: At that time he put the Temptations against the Vibrations. The Vibrations were hot at one time. They were the hottest thing in this city at one time.

G: Oh God!

S: What we used to do, we used to try and run a tight ship.

Q: How did you limit people to a certain number of passes when they were used to getting more passes?

G: It wasn't that many passes.

S: Yes we did George.

G: Yeah, but it wasn't that many.

S: Yes it was. When I got to the Uptown, the passes were just flowing, and I cut them out. Remember when I was a 'no good son-

Georgie and the Uptown

of-a-bitch’.

G: You've always been a ‘no good son-of-a-bitch’.

S: How many times did they come to you and complain, 'he won't let us in, he won't let us in'?. You know what I mean. Listen, everyone that I didn't let in that was another dollar in his pocket.

Q: But how did you control the back door?

S: That was hard, that was hard. George and them wanted me to be the bad guy. He'd call up front and say, “Sid, I don't know who those people are backstage but you need to get them to clear out back there.” He had to stay the good guy. But I'd go back there and take two of my men with me and clear it. They'd say, “Well George,” I'd say, “No, no, no, no.” George would see me and get away because George didn't want to be the bad guy. He had me for the hatchet man. I'd say, “I don't care what George say, you gotta go.” George would be walking away when they try to call him.

Q: How many people did you have on your staff?

S: I ran the operation from front door to back door...I don't know how much of that he wants to go into.

Q: But he walked away with some money though?

S: He made money, that's for sure. He made money. George made money.

Q: Was he an easy hit for people to come in and borrow money from him?

S: He was an easy touch. He's always been an easy touch.

Q: Why was that?

S: I don't know, that's his nature. People come and borrow off of

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

him.

Q: How about entertainers, did they have to borrow off of him?

S: Yeah, they borrowed off of him, shit yeah. See when they came in town they could get a draw, but they couldn't get no more draw than what they already earned. Say if they're getting \$2500 for the 10 days, that's \$250 a day, and believe it or not that's the way it would run. Say they worked, they'd come in the first day then they'd need a draw and they'd get a couple of hundred dollars at the end of the night. Cause they didn't have nothing, you know what I mean?

Q: Were there any times when entertainers wanted to go over that amount?

S: No, no, we would never let them overdraw what they already earned. Whatever their salary was, we prorated that for the 10 days. At \$2500 dollars for 10 days at the end of that first night they could draw a couple of hundred dollars, but that's about the best.

Q: Who paid for their hotel bills?

S: We used to stand for their hotel bills when they came here. When they got in town and they didn't have nowhere to stay, we used to have to pay their hotel bills. We used to have to pay the cab fare to get to the Uptown. Once they got there we would put them in the Chesterfield hotel at Broad and Oxford. Later we used to use the hotel on the Parkway down there, the Franklin Motor Inn, and we used to take the responsibility of their bill being paid.

Q: Suppose they went there and ran up a big drinking bill there. Who would take care of that?

S: The only thing we would guarantee was the room. Any food and stuff like that they had to pay out of their own pocket.

Georgie and the Uptown

Q: So when you called the hotel as the manager of the theatre, you put a limit on how much they could charge, didn't you?

S: No, the only thing we would do was guarantee them for the room. No eating or nothing, just for sleeping. How many entertainers threatened to walk off the show, and you told them to go ahead walk, walk? Cause see I'm a tell you the whole thing. The whole thing boiled down to this...and tell me if I'm right or wrong George, back in the days, 'DAS was the hottest thing around, and George was the hottest thing in the city. Couldn't nobody touch George. [Sid turns to George] Was it Higginbotham [Atty. J. Leon] who drew up the contract you had with the Uptown? George was very smart. The contract was in George's name, never the station's. When George left and went to WHAT he took the Uptown with him. Right? Then when he went to WHAT, WDAS went to 52nd Street trying to freeze him out, the Nixon and the State Theatre to try and freeze him out. But he just kept rolling, kept rolling, and we sat down and talked and said, "they're not going to...we're going to be here when they're gone." And that's exactly what happened. When they saw they couldn't do it. Then they worked out the deal with George to come back to DAS. George went back on his own terms.

Q: He had a better chance that time?

S: No, he had a better chance at first, because the way he had it hooked up, the contract was always his contract. We didn't have to talk to nobody at the station. We didn't have to talk to Bob Klein or nobody. Shit no. The contract was in George's name.

Q: So Higginbotham was your main attorney at that time, right George?

G: He was my lawyer at that time, yeah.

Q: He was rough, huh?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

S: He protected him. He protected him.

Q: Did you have anytime when a road manager of a group would give you any trouble or anything?

G: Hell no. Most of them didn't have no road manager.

S: For one thing, they didn't have no road manager; they took care of the business themselves. Patti Labelle and people like that, they had road managers.

Q: How about Motown acts? Didn't they have a road manager?

G: They had a tour manager.

S: About 3 or 4 groups. He'd be with them.

Q: Jackie Wilson?

G: Nope. They didn't have it. You can't make them have it if they didn't have it.

Q: So essentially the only people dealing with a project would be you, Sid, and the group?

S: Right, we had the last say... I'll show you another thing. George would run those freedom shows. How many people did the Convention Hall hold?

G: *13,000.*

S: And they would be full. They would be full and that's no joke. The shows would be full. George never had shows that you could say flopped. Now I know other people George let come in and had shows that flopped.

Q: Did Bishop's shows flop?

Georgie and the Uptown

S: Bishop had some successful shows, but his shows never kicked the way George's shows did. His shows did okay. He did okay.

Q: What was different about George's shows?

S: I don't know. I think George just had a hang on the people. They'd see his name and...you tell me anywhere in the country...now you listen to what I'm saying, anywhere in the country you travel that you see big named groups come in, James Brown, this and that come in, and see the dj's name at the top. You don't see it. The dj's name is at the bottom. Okay you check the pictures of the marquee down there and see whose name was in big letters at the top on every one of those shows. Now that was unusual. If Philadelphia was one of the only cities you saw this at. One guy made a statement about that. You know who that was? James Brown.

Q: What did James Brown say?

G: I don't remember that.

S: He didn't make it to you. He made a statement that his name should be at the top. And he was told that that's not the way we do it here. You come here and you had to do it our way. One thing they could never do is come here and take over. This is one city they could never do this in. They couldn't get in this city without coming through George. That was the whole thing.

Advertising

Q: How were the shows advertised? Were the advertising budgets set aside by the theatres or by George?

S: By George. George set the budget aside for the advertising.

Q: George what kind of advertising did you do outside of the station?

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G: Didn't need nothing else. Posters.

S: We took care of the posters, and the pictures, and the newspapers.

Q: Does anybody have any of the old posters or flyers from that period?

G: Nope.

S: George, you get on the radio tomorrow and find somebody who has some posters from the shows at the Uptown back in the years, and they'll bring them in and we'll give them so much for it if they got it. Or let us take a picture of the posters. There got to be somebody out there...you know how some people save a poster from year to year. There's got to be somebody out there with a poster.

Q: At the time you were doing it, you didn't look at it as something people would look at 30 years down the line, did you? You didn't see it as an historical thing, did you?

G: Nope.

S: I didn't. I don't know about George. Another thing too, back in the days with those groups, George was the number one man in the city. When the black groups cut a record, the white stations wouldn't even let them in the front door. Who helped break the record? George. They depended on George. They travelled from California everywhere, just to be on George's show, to talk about their record or something, and for George to break their record. The white stations wouldn't play the black records. They had to play the records, get in the number 1 slot for 6 to 8 weeks before the white stations would play them. Then they *may* start playing them.

Q: They said here you had to do a second show within a month's

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time, that was kind of unusal. Who was on that show before?

S: That was right before me.

G: That was on the holidays.

Q: The first one was when you had people you had to turn away.

S: When was that?

Q: May, 1960. Then you went over to Camden, then came back and did the same people plus James Brown.

S: You went over to Camden and did a show in Camden?

G: Right, we couldn't do shows here on Sundays.

Q: You had the Drifters, the Isley Brothers, James Brown and the Flames. That must have been the second time you brought James Brown here, is that right?

G: James came in 1959, I believe?

Q: Was that one of the biggest shows you had done at that time in terms of audiences?

G: No.

Q: Who had been bigger before that time?

G: All of them were big, because we had all packed houses.

Q: Who owned the Uptown during that time?

S: Sam Steuffel.

Q: Had he owned it for a long time?

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G: Yeah, he owned it for a long time. Then he sold it to the Milgram family.

Q: Were they doing any kind of live shows before George came?

S: That's when I came in when the Milgram family bought it.

G: They had shows in there many years ago. But that was Vaudeville.

S: It wasn't no rock in there that I know of. George brought the rock there.

Q: You mentioned on Thursday nights a lot of white students from Temple came in there, right?

G: That was white night.

Q: Do you remember how it came to be Thursday night?

G: How do I know?

S: They used to come to the teenage matinee. 50 cents. 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

G: But a lot of whites came on Thursdays. That was the night you had a lot of whites. They were welcomed.

Q: Do you remember any case where you had racial problems once they got in there?

G: Nope.

Q: You didn't have many fights either?

G: Hell no.

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Q: How many ushers/security did you have in there?

S: It all depended on the type of crowd. We had about 16 to 20. About three backstage.

G: There were only 2 backstage.

S: Right, one on each side. Then we had one on the door. Three altogether.

Q: So you didn't have much problem backstage?

S: No, if it got too crowded he would call me up and say, "Who are all those people back there?" I'd say, "I'll take care of it."

Q: Was there somebody who worked between the two of you?

S: I had a stage manager, Bill Nash.

G: That ain't important. He was just the stage manager.

Q: But he kept things flowing though, George.

G: He didn't keep things flowing. We kept things flowing. He did what we told him to do. That's the one you'd have to watch for letting people in.

S: He was the one that used to let the people in. And George would call me up, and all they had to do was smile to him and he'd say "Come on, come on."

G: And get mad when you put them out. He threatened to strike.

S: He did. And he could strike too, 'cause he was the president of the union, the secretary, and the treasurer of the union. Five men in the union and he's everything.

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G: They ain't have no 5, they had about 4.

S: They had about five 'cause they had the part timers. Three full timers and 2 part timers.

Q: Didn't the union require you have a certain number of musicians to play in those shows?

G: Yeah, we had to do that.

Q: How many had to be there?

G: 12 and 1, 13. Twelve musicians and a house leader. That was before they had the little combinations.

Q: Who did the musician union person come and collect from? George or you?

S: Who was that guy's name? Was it Danny? Danny used to always come around. He'd come around rough. "Oh no I'll pull them off the show. I'll pull them off." But we'd take Danny and talk to Danny, we'd always work it out.

G: Give the motherfucker a few dollars. That's what happened. Give them some money. That's all they wanted was some money.

Q: How about crowd control, Sid? Now you had lines all the way up Broad Street.

G: No problem. We didn't have nobody out there. They controlled themselves. We didn't have nobody walking up and down the street, did we?

S: We didn't have fights and stuff like that.

G: You couldn't make a fight if it wasn't there.

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S: You can read every paper you want. Find one where someone got shot or something like that. You won't find it. Have you found anything? That was hard doing, but we did it.

G: We didn't have nobody outside.

S: People stood in line orderly, and sometimes it used to be freezing cold out there. And George would say, "Sid, ain't you gonna open up?" I'd say, "Give me ten more minutes." And George would go out there and see the people out there freezing, and some people had blankets around them. That's right.

Q: That in itself was something worth reporting, the fact that they kept so orderly.

S: You may have had an argument or a shoving once every blue moon, but other than that you never heard of no shooting, no cutting, no fighting, or no one got killed at the Uptown or nothing like that. You ain't never heard that. To run shows for that many years and never have a problem like that, that's a trophy of it's own.

Q: How many years did you manage, Sid? From 1960 to what?

S: About 20 years. Till 1978-79 we closed.

Q: When was your last show?

G: I don't even remember. It's been so long. The last one we did was with the Impressions up there. The last one we did up there was two days...remember that weekend with John Bowser?

Q: Why did they stop having shows there?

S: The acts got too high. The acts got outrageous. Wasn't that what it was George?

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G: Yeah.

S: The price went sky high. That's my opinion. During the days of the late 50's-60's and all like that...white stations wouldn't play the records. You had to come and get George to break the record. So therefore, George didn't have to deal with no booking agency. Deal directly with the record company. If they want the record broke we want the group. The group may want \$7,000, George would say the best I can give up is \$2500. We got the group. We got the group for that.

G: We always got them on American Bandstand that's what they liked.

S: Then turned around and got them on Bandstand. Now how about when you had your own T.V. show. They used to do that and then he used to bring them on his show. What channel was it? 17 or 48? 17, up on Mermaid Lane. And George used to be part owner of channel 17. George fought, but George was too easy going. He was too much of a soft touch. Too much of a soft touch, and people took advantage of him.

G: And I'm going to tell on those bastards now.

Q: Did you ever tell him about it when it was happening?

G: All the time.

S: Yeah I used to tell George. George said, "Nah, nah, I don't mind helping him." I could see what they were doing.

Q: How could you see, Sid?

S: Cause you know how people come...He could see when somebody was getting something from me. Like I could see you, you could see me. That's the way it worked. But like I'm saying he was too much of a soft touch.

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Q: And people knew it?

S: And they took advantage of it too.

G: Sid said they took advantage of it too. Can you put that in the book?

S: People called when they didn't have food, when they didn't have this or they didn't have that. He'd tell them to come on out to the station and get it.

Q: Was the biggest challenge when the riot broke out in '64 and George left the stage to go out and help the riot?

S: It was George who the people listened to. As a matter of fact, Commissioner Leary called George to walk and what not. When George came on the scene, the police were standing there, and they were throwing stuff at the police. I remember at Ridge and Oxford, and 22nd and Ridge down there. The cops were getting ready to move on 'em, and George walked up from behind the police, they saw George and said, "Hey George, hey George." George said, "Come on man, let's cool this. Come on." And he walked over there and they said, "Okay George, okay." The whole crowd turned around and went on home. And the police, they were getting ready to crash. But they would listen to him, cause he had gained their respect. As soon as they saw him that was it. It was over with.

Q: Hadn't Stanley Branch, a Raymond Pace Alexander and others spoken to the group?

S: They all were there, and they all were a lot of help, but I'm telling you all they needed to see was Georgie's face and that was it. Like he was the legend. When they saw him that was it. He could walk...The cops told him don't go over there. He said, "They're my people, *they are my people*." Walked right into them. They all

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encircled him and all like that. And they all disbursed and went on home. He told them go on home.

Q: Did the show stop during that period?

S: No, we didn't have no trouble with the show. We didn't have that kind of trouble.

G: They were going to close us down though.

S: They were going to close it down, but George went out there and talked to the people, disbursed the people on Ridge Ave., and Columbia Ave., and got them to go home and everything and they didn't bother us. They allowed us to continue.

Q: You make it sound like Jesus parting the waters.

S: [Sid talks more rapidly.] That was the closest thing to it. If you would have been there and saw the situation. I remember I was down there at the time. Let me tell you something. It was rough, rough, rough. George went out there. He went into the crowd. He went into the crowd, and the police told him not to, and he said, "they're my people, they're my people."

Q: What do you feel managed to keep things together all those years? Why did you stay there 20 years?

S: Because what we had was a good team. We communicated. Got along together. Once in a while we might have ups and downs or misunderstandings...

G: Or he'd try to beat me out of all my money...

S: ...The only time he'd get mad with me was when I'd win his money, and he'd say I cheated. And when he'd loose he said, "You cheated."

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G: Yeah, you cheated me, Sid. You got me. We wasn't rubbing heads. We were playing poker. Moms Mabely was a cheat. Redd Foxx was a big cheat.

Q: Moms played with you also?

G: Well we played checkers, but she'd be stealing checkers off the board. Moms was a big cheat. Redd Foxx was the biggest cheat though.

S: Redd Foxx would cheat in a minute.

G: If you'd blink your eye he got you.

Q: Which entertainers did you get along best with?

G: I got along with all of them because they all needed me so I didn't have a problem with any of them.

Q: Were any of them your friends?

G: We were associates, not friends.

Q: You didn't take any entertainers as friends?

G: No, we were associates. One thing about black people, we use the word friend loosely, and it don't mean anything. A friend is somebody you can call whether you're wrong or right; he's there with you. You don't have any of these fair weathered friends. Me and Sid became friends because he was there. People use the word friends... They are not your friends. They are your associates. They are people you work with. They're not friends. If I have a friend I can call him right now and he's going to come right there for me. That's what a friend is. So I don't use the term friends cause I don't have very many. Very few. I know a million people, but no friends. These are just people I know.

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Q: Sid's a friend?

G: Oh yeah.

S: But I'll tell you George...

G: When I needed some help sometimes, I would come to him. He would help me, that's how friends are. If he need me, he'd call; I'd come. That's what friends are. That's a long time coming. Kenny Gamble is a friend.

S: I remember when Gamble used to work here. That's before the place was changed around. Kenny Gamble and the Romeos worked in here, and I gave them \$125 a night. Kenny will tell you.

G: He worked at the Uptown and didn't get nothing.

S: I'm telling you he used to work here, him and his group, \$125 dollars a night. That's what he got. Can you believe it? See, Kenny is a good guy. Kenny ain't changed. If he knew you 30 years ago he'll know you today the same way. He don't change.

Q: What do you remember most about James Brown?

S: George remembers more about James Brown. James was always good to me. He always treated me good. I never had no problem with James. James was the type of guy...

G: He had a big ego...

S: Oh yeah.

Q: Did most of them have big egos?

G: You said James Brown, you can't put them all in the same category.

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S: James Brown was in a category of his own.

G: He was by himself. He said he was the greatest entertainer the world had ever seen. He's bigger than Ray Charles, bigger than Jackie Wilson and all the rest. He said he was the world's hardest working entertainer.

S: As a matter of fact when James got out of jail the show was supposed to have been your show. He promised over the radio. A million people were listening. He said, "when I get out, George, I want to make this commitment. I'm making this commitment to you. The first show I'll do, I'm coming to Philadelphia. I'm doing the show for you. It's your show, I'm doing the show for you."

G: On the *radio!* I got a tape.

S: And after he got out of jail, the whole thing turned around.

G: I ain't heard from that sucker.

S: He tried to get in touch with him; the next thing he know, he was booked to come into Philadelphia. But George stopped it, though. Put a cramp in it. Which was only right. You don't make a commitment like that. I'm going to tell you the truth. Come to think of it, you don't hear about James working so much, cause he put the price up so high and want so much, but I don't hardly hear him working nowhere hardly. He done priced himself out.

Q: You were saying essentially that's what happened to the people at the Uptown?

S: That's what they did. You had the Atlantic City Casinos and places like that. They didn't want to come back to the Uptown.

G: Because it was a black neighborhood. These were black entertainers that didn't want to work in a black theatre. They wanted to work in white theatres. That's what happened. It didn't

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change nothing. They just didn't want to work in a black theatre.

Q: You were saying that now they began to have booking agencies when before you dealt directly with the recording companies?

S: Not everybody could do it, just George.

G: Motown was always good as far as sending us acts. They always gave us all the Motown Revues. We didn't have no problem with Motown. There were never any problems with Motown or Berry Gordy. None. It's just when the acts got so big, they wanted to work in Las Vegas. Back then they couldn't work in Las Vegas. They didn't have nowhere to go but the Uptown, the Royal, the Apollo. That's where they were. But now they have the chance to work in some of these other places they started wanting to cross over. They want to start appealing to whites, and as a result, they lost their black following trying to appeal to white folks.

S: And some of them never did make it back.

G: As soon as the Civil Rights Movement came along, they were in trouble because all the white folks got mad with black folks anyway.

Q: Did you see that coming when you were working for integration?

G: Well, it wasn't the idea of seeing it coming; it was what was right. You can see a lot of things coming sometimes, but if it's right you have to go ahead and do it. And it was right to do what we did. If you're going to protect yourself and just do that, then you've almost lost. If you're an opportunist then you do it that way. You take what you can get and run with it. We did a lot of things. We had all kind of programs for the people back then. But they took advantage of it. They didn't appreciate it. I don't think the people appreciated the service that we gave. I don't think they really did.

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'Cause they were creeps. A lot of people were messed up in the mind. They take goodness for weakness. They take advantage of you when you started to show compassion. A lot of people start to take advantage, that includes the average John to the Civil Rights leaders who take advantage of other people too. They pretend to be black and they ain't nothing but a bunch of hypocrites. They pretend to love people but they're out there for themselves. Politicians do the same thing, they're out there for themselves. They're not interested in serving *nobody*. It took a long time to learn that. These people are hustlers. They are the worst kind of hustlers the pimps: preachers and politicians. And my father was a preacher so I can talk about them. I know what they did. My father was a preacher. There are some good preachers out there, but most of them are just for the money. Go to the bank on Monday morning and see if you see them in the bank making a deposit. It's the preachers. The church people.

Q: What makes him the kind of guy he is?

S: Look at it like this. This is the type of guy that would give you his shirt off his back. He's always been like this. He's the same way right now. He hasn't changed. The same guy. The same guy he was 20-25 years ago.

Q: Do you think younger people realize that?

S: They don't. Some of the young ones don't know him as Georgie Woods from the Uptown. He's been away from the Uptown 20 years. But, their parents know all about George.

G: You ought to get Del Shields in New York. You ought to get Bill Cosby if you can find him, I don't know where he is. Bill did a benefit show at the Uptown with Cecil Moore and Jackie Wilson. I got pictures of that. I know he was there at that show. He did a benefit show for the NAACP when he was in Temple University.

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S: Why don't you give a call for posters, and if they have posters we will give them a reward or something for the posters. Or we would just need...the poster that would date back the farthest. Let me see how far back you go. Bring it right on up. Somebody out there got those posters.

G: We made a million of them.

S: You know who probably got one if I could find him, you know that midget, Steve? He lived in Germantown somewhere. Steve would know where to get some of that stuff. He used to take care of the advertisements. I remember when I sold the Uptown to John Bowser. There were a lot of those posters there and I didn't do nothing with them. That was 12 or 13 years ago.

Q: You didn't think about preserving them? Why is that?

S: I don't know! Cause you didn't see this. If you knew that this was happening or coming you would have done it, but who saw it? George didn't even see this I don't think. So there wasn't no reason...I don't know there just was no...

G: *It was a different era, a different time.*

Woods, James Brown and American Bandstand

Several of the best known entertainers who appeared at the Uptown during George's tenure give varied accounts of their experiences in Philly and especially at the Uptown Theatre. James Brown gives this account in his autobiography, *James Brown: The Godfather of Soul*, "We closed Sunday night [Royal Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland] took one day off, then went into the Uptown in Philadelphia. I met a local disc jockey there who talked to me about getting "Try Me" to Dick Clark to play on American Bandstand, which at the time was still done in Philadelphia.

At the Uptown we were on a bill with The Drifters, the Vibrations, and the Isley Brothers. Harold Melvin and the Blue

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Notes, when they were called just the Blue Notes, were there too. They did a big opening with the chorus line and then came on later and did a few tunes. This was still the era of the nice looking top hat and cane groups like the Blue Notes, the rough looking macho thing that we had hadn't come into style yet.

We weren't headlining-the Isley Brothers were-but we weren't opening anymore, so on opening night we sat in the wings and watched the first few acts. Fine. Then here came the Vibrations- Carl Fisher, James Johnson, David Govan, Richie Owens and Don Bradley. We had never seen them before and we couldn't believe it. We thought we were the only ones who jumped over each other and went into splits or cut flips and wound up in a split, but the Vibrations came off the stage, the people were hollering so loud for them that you couldn't hardly hear our names announced. As we went on I told the Flames to really work on our closing with 'Please'. We went out and did our show and when we got to the end they brought out the red suitcase. I dropped to my knees singing, 'Please' and they patted me on the back and put the coat over my shoulders.

I got up and then fell to my knees again. We kept doing it and the people became aroused. The curtain closed, then it opened back up and we went out to take our bow. The people were on their feet, stomping and cheering and yelling for us. We came off saying, "Okay we did pretty good, we got nothing to worry about." Then we saw the Isley Brothers coming from the back of the theatre, swinging on ropes, like Tarzan, onto the stage. They hardly had to sing at all. They'd already killed 'em. Between the Vibrations and the Isley Brothers, we had some real competition. Now we were saying, "Aw, naw, we got nine more days of this? But we perfected our closing, and by the end of the run we put a pounding on both of them."

By then the disc jockey was saying he'd take "Try Me" to Dick Clark. I was very excited about it, until he charged me \$1,000 to do it, the rat. I love that particular disc jockey to this day and I'd do anything in the world for him right now, but he was a rat to do that. I paid it, though.

Back in Macon we watched "Try Me" played on American

Bandstand. We had heard it was going to be on, so we were all sitting around the Two Spot, Mr. Brantley's club, waiting for it. They played it on the portion of the show where the kids rated the records. One little girl said she liked it because you could dance close to it. The rest low-rated it pretty bad. I think we got a thirty-something, a low thirty-something. Man, it destroyed us. We were going crazy, saying "Naw man, this can't be true." I was thinking: 'I paid that jock a thousand dollars for this?' Mr. Brantley, God bless his soul, cut us all off. "Look," he said, "this doesn't mean the record can't be a hit. It already is a hit. So y'all just go on about your business and **keep** it a hit."

Beginning with the March, 1956 release of "Please, Please, Please" James Brown has been building hit after hit. His appearance on the Dick Clark certainly aided in increasing his popularity. It is to Woods' credit that he succeeded in getting Brown heard at that time.

Dick Clark Discusses Brown, Mary Wells, Ike and Tina Turner

Dick Clark provides an interesting perspective on Brown and other black performers in his book, *The History of American Bandstand*: "Motown made its Bandstand debut on December 27, 1960, as Smokey Robinson and the Miracles performed their second hit, 'Shop Around', which reached number 2 and was later just as big a hit for the Captain and Tennille.) Mary Wells made her *Bandstand* debut on July 7, 1961, with her second hit, the number 33, 'I Don't Want To Take A Chance' her biggest hit, 'My Guy' would come in 1964.

Ike and Tina Turner made their first appearance on the show on October 3, 1960, with the first of their twenty hits through 1975, 'A Fool In Love' (it hit number 27). James Brown made the first of his dozens of Bandstand appearances on October 19, 1961. With 'I Don't Mind' and 'Baby, You're Right' his seventh and eighth hits with the Famous Flames. James would go on to have an amazing **ninety-one** hits through the early eighties. Memphis-soul giant Solomon Burke debuted on the show March 20, 1962,

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with the second of his twenty-six hits, 'Cry To Me', later covered by the Rolling Stones."

As the decade progressed, the musically inspired dance crazes kept coming. Dee Dee Sharp (who later married Philadelphia Soul Producer Kenny Gamble) introduced 'Mashed Potato Time' on the show that she needed 'Gravy (For My Mashed Potatoes)' A month after that, Little Eva (Eva Boyd- who worked as a baby sitter for Carole King, a Brill Building Songwriter, and later highly successful solo singer) performed 'The Locomotion' on the show. (It became a top hit again in the seventies, for Grand Funk Railroad.) Interestingly enough, Carole King had written the song. Dick Clark's *Bandstand* went national in 1957, first around the time Woods was beginning his "Uptown" stage. Downtown was Dick Clark and Tony Mamarella- the man who made things happen. Clark's account of the early days, appear in Joe Smith's *Off The Record: An Oral History of Popular Music*. "There were two of us in the office, Tony Mamarella and me. We had seven women answering mail. The promotion men came in and out at will. We had no hours. We worked in a tiny office with two desks facing each other. The office was so small we could reach out and touch all four walls."

It must have been a small but busy office. Clark continues, "The record companies worked a kickback system with us. Artists would come on the show, and the record company would allegedly pay them for their performance. We'd pay for maybe half the people who came on, and when our money ran out, we'd say to the record company, 'We'll book them and you'll pay them! It wasn't illegal, nor was it immoral. In fact NBC was doing exactly the same thing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, so it was quite common."

Unlike the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and NBC, Clark came under heavy criticism. Dick Clark continues, "It was such an exciting period. Things seemed to happen overnight. You found a record breaking in Cleveland or Columbus, and you'd charge in there and find some guy who didn't have have the wherewithal, and you'd lay a few dollars on him, take the master, give him a piece of the record, put it on the air, and the next day it would

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explode all over the country...At the time I was a 50 per cent owner in Swan Records. And we used our own acts, which people looked at as a conflict of interest. I always found that amusing because I'm certain that Lawrence Welk, the biggest music publisher I knew, was using some of his copyrights on his show. But we got criticized for it. And that led to what was not such a terrific period for me. I remember having to go to the corner drugstore, to a phone booth, to call my lawyer, because I knew our phones were tapped. Government agents broke into my house. They were a tough bunch of cookies.

And I took it on the chin a little bit, I suppose because I was so highly visible. But I never just took money to play records. Again, it goes back to bookkeeping. With all the companies I had, we had a budget for paying guys to play records. That doesn't necessarily make it morally right, but the minute the government saw that I was an entrepreneur- the payer and not the payee- they said, "Well, he's not so bad."

There was only one man in all of my life who ever offered me money to play a record. I have no idea who he was, but he wanted to give me a hundred dollars to play his record. I said, "Sorry I don't do that." Hey, I was making over a half a million dollars anyway. I didn't have to bother."

Further illuminating the period from his perspective Clark says, "Motown had gotten itself established at the very tail end of the fifties and would soon become an enormously important musical/cultural force by crossing black music over to the mass pop market as never before. In fact one factor in Motown's revolutionary success lay in an assimilative tactic not unlike *Bandstand's* own dressing up of it's audience- that is, the famous Motown. Finishing school set up by label chief Berry Gordy, Jr. (last seen writing Jackie Wilson's first solo hit single, "Reet Petite"), who believed that proper grooming, appearance, and behavior were just as crucial to success as raw musical talent.

Clark like Georgie recognized the major achievement of Berry Gordy and the Motown label. We sought to find out George's relationship to Gordy.

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Q: Why did you take a chance on Berry Gordy's acts when they weren't that well known in the beginning? Did Irv [Nahan, a business associate] have a hookup with him or what?

Woods: Irv didn't know no Berry Gordy. I introduced him to Berry Gordy. How would Irv know when I'm black and he's white. Irv didn't know Berry Gordy. Berry used to stay at my house when he came here to Philly. And I stayed at his house when I went to Detroit.

Q: How did you first encounter Berry?

Woods: Well I was playing music, and I had taken a few of his records. When you do something everybody knows about it. They'd know when I break a record. When I'd go in there and break a record everybody knew that I was doing it. That's how I got to know him. Because I played his music, and made him a lot of money.

Q: So he called you first?

Woods: Yeah he called me. Me and him almost got locked up once. We were sitting in a car in front of the Bellvue Stratford hotel. He had come to the radio station to bring me a record, and some man by the name of Ferguson, I think it was Clarence Ferguson. Me and Berry Gordy were sitting in this brand new car. They came up and asked us to get out. This was about a half block from City Hall. Dilworth and Tate. I didn't know either of them, but the cop didn't know I didn't know them. So I said I'm going to have you transferred. I said we're not getting out of the car. We broke no law, I'm not getting out the car. And Berry got nervous. He said man if you do this in Detroit they'll have us locked up in a minute. He said be cool man, be cool. He got a little scared. But we got out and some cops came up that I knew and they talked. Then there was Dick Anderson.

Q: So that was when you began your relationship with Berry

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Gordy?

Woods: It started when he started his record company. He had a company but it was very small. He had basically Smokey Robinson. But he had some records out, and he wanted me to introduce Stevie Wonder and all the acts. He knew what I was doing here. So he would let me get the entertainers here first, and if a record came out he'd get it to me first. As a result people would listen to me, because they knew I would always have the top records, and I'd have the Motown Revue when it came through, and it would have all the stars. He was a very loyal person. Then he went to the coast and then he lost it.

Georgie Woods met Berry Gordy early in the game and the two became friends. it was a symbiotic relationship where both parties gained tremendously. Fortunately where both parties gained tremendously. Fortunately, such insight enabled George to provide Motown acts their first exposure to the larger Philadelphia community. Lines would wrap around the theatre like a *vévé*. This meant increased revenue at the bow office. On the other hand George's breaking the groups on his popular radio show increased Gordy's revenue base.

Earlier on George reflected on the genuine relationship he had enjoyed with some entertainers and company executives in the music industry:

"Nat King Cole was one of the greatest Black entertainers I had ever seen. I broke a record for him called "Ramblin' Rose" and he wanted to kind of reward me. He askd me to go out to Las Vegas with him. I had never been on a plane before so I said yeah I'd go. And then he always wanted me to bring him barbecue sauce from B's Barbecue down on South Street. I had a record that he sent me for Christmas, but I lost it. I didn't thing it was important. I just didn't have an ego like that."

When asked which performer was at the Uptown was the most unique, George replied, "The most unique was Jackie of the Starlights. Underrated...Kids loved him. He was like a kid. All the kids in the town loved Jackie and the Starlights. But he drank that wine all the time. He wound up killing himself with wine. In

fact he made a film, I wish I had it, of him drinking wine in the basement of the Uptown. But I don't know what happened to the film. Jackie Wilson was excited."

Miles Davis at the Uptown Theater

His account of the show on which Miles Davis appeared sheds some light on the challenges he faced. George provides background to the newspaper accounts at that time. Moreover, he relates his own personal experience with Miles. Everybody has a Miles story. Here is Georgie Woods' story:

Q. What led to your suing Miles Davis following an appearance at the Uptown?

A. He was doing a show, I was the promoter, and Del Shields was the MC, and I think Richard Pryor was on that show. What happened is Miles had a tendency to walk off and not perform. And he did it to me and I just couldn't handle that. So I sued him.

Q. Did you ever recover anything?

A. Whatever I was paying him he had to pay me.

Q. You collected from him?

A. Yes, the union paid me. Miles didn't speak to me from then on. He was a karate expert so I didn't mess with him. Miles was a black belt. He beat the stew out of Jock-O. At Pop's Bar. Jock-O used to rent his apartment out to these entertainers when they didn't have anywhere to stay, and some kind of way he didn't pay Jock-O. He couldn't go downtown and stay. Black people couldn't go downtown and stay so Jock-O rented his apartment out. Man, Jock-O went to collect his money, Miles karated him. Had his face bruised. I didn't mess with Miles. I always had a gun when I was around Miles. I always had a gun, 'cause Miles was dangerous.

Memories and Movement



by Charles G. Lee



Courtesy George W.

**George and singer Jackie Wilson hold
honorary NAACP Awards, backstage at the Uptown**

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Q. So you didn't take no chances?

A. Not with Miles Davis. No way!

Q. What kind of guy was he like otherwise?

A. Miles, I never talked to him that much 'cause he was very...he was very laid back. He was cool. I liked his son. His son was nice. He had a little son he left here. He was over at Birdland's. Standing over on the corner playing at Birdland. He was supposed to be playing for me, and I had his son over here.

Q. you mean the night he was supposed to be doing your show?

A. Not the night. The week. It was a 10 day show at the Uptown. it was the Christmas Holiday and he went to New York. He played one day, and then he walked off. He didn't do the whole show.

Q. So you never talked to Miles about that? Did your lawyers pursue it?

A. I let the union take care of it.

Q. Were the union guys straight up at that time?

A. Yeah they were pretty straight. I think they put a little too much on the theatres that were doing shows, because they'd force you to take people that you really didn't need. As a result of that it put a little burden on the promoter.

Q. How did ou come up with the house band, "Doc Bagby's?"

A. Because you were required to have it. The union said you had to have a union band, because everybody didn't have...today every act has their own three and four pieces, but then they didn't have it.

Georgie and the Uptown

Q. So essentially when you went in to do a show a person had to have it?

A. All you needed was a drummer.

Q. How about housing?

Q. Well they stayed at the Chesterfield Hotel, and the other hotel ther at Broad and Girard. The real big, huge one right there where that McDonald's is. They'd go in there and negotiate their own prices.

All you needed was a drummer. Could it have been Philly Joe Jones who accompanied Miles an the Uptown gig? How did Miles find the drumbeat? Was Georgie Woods' beat the same as the big beat? The headline of a newspaper at the time read, "Georgie Woods Slaps \$20,000 Suit on Miles Davis; Nerve Ailment Blinds Del Shields During Show." The article opens:

Miles Davis put me in the hospital...Without attempting to conceal his rage. Disc jockey Del Shields told the Tribune Thursday that jazz trumpet star Miles Davis was responsible for wrecking the eight day long Christmas jazz show at the Uptown Theatre and caused him to enter Wills Eye with a nervous condition that has resulted in temporary blindness.

Where's Miles, Where's Miles?

Shields was the MC of the illfated jazz production which was climaxed on New Year's Eve as they angrily chanted, "Where's Miles...Where's Miles!"

George's response to this breach of contract was considerably different from Del Shields, at the time a disc jockey at WDAS who hosted a jazz program. Woods said the Uptown Theatre will close its doors before Miles Davis gets the opportunity to play there again. After this, he won't even be able to buy a ticket.

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Another journalist wrote about the incident like this, "The fiery little musician whose trumpet playing ability is equalled only by his fierce temper, failed to show up either on Christmas Day when the show opened or on New Year's day. He also missed three of the four performances on New Year's Eve...Davis walked off after giving a performance at 3:30 Monday afternoon, New Year's Eve."

Woods' prediction came true. "The Uptown Theatre will close its doors before Miles Davis gets the opportunity to play there again." In the meantime, many more artists did play on that stage and their memories are still intact. Origins. Memories. Discoveries. Memories. Destinies. Memories. Memories of the Uptown.

Shield was quoted as saying, "I never dreamed he would walk off the show. It all happened so suddenly and so unexpectedly. We had enjoyed the best of relationship during the show. Why, he even took time out one afternoon between shows to encourage a kid who was studying trumpet. On another occasion he lent money to a fellow musician. As a matter of fact, he bought me two fifths of Scotch whiskey on the very day he walked off the show. He told one of the stage hands he wanted to buy it for me because I was one of the nicest guys he had ever worked with. Miles suddenly got up, walked over to the mirror, adjusted his tie and said, 'I'm going to leave this thing to you cats.' Then he put on his coat. I told him he couldn't just up and leave like that on New Year's Eve. I really thought he was kidding. All he did was smile and walked out of the door. I believed he was coming back because he had left his trumpet in his dressing room. I didn't get worried until he didn't show up for the next performance. Then, when he didn't show for the third performance, I knew he really had gone."

Temptations

Otis Williams, founder of the Temptations, remembers writing in his book, *Temptations* by Otis Williams with Patricia

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Romanowski. He said, "One of the good things about playing rooms like the Copa was that we got to work more standards into our act, which we loved. Probably the most difficult of all the songs in our repertoire was 'Ole Man River,' a tune we started doing in 1964 after the Flamingos did it at the Uptown in Philadelphia."

Elsewhere Otis notes, "As well as things were going, we never fell into believing that we couldn't be any better. We were always working new things into our act. One of the biggest brainstorms hit in Philadelphia, where they'd booked us to perform in another battle of the groups. This time we were up against Gladys Knight and the Pips, the Four Tops, the Contours, and the Vibrations (whose sloop dance step we adapted to our trademark Temptations walk). We were sitting around talking during a break in rehearsals, "Man," somebody said, "We need something that will make us different...If we had a microphone stand with four mikes on it, that would be different. Instead of four of us bunched up around one mic, and one of us on the other, we could really do our steps, and it would be unique."

Among the groups the Temptations met in Philly was Patti LaBelle and the Blue Belles. Otis' memories are intact. "Another of my favorite romances was with Patti LaBelle. She and he group, the Blue Belles - Sarah Dash, Nona Hendryx, and future Supreme Cindy Birdsong were on many of the same package tours as we were. Since their 1962 hit, 'I Sold My Heart to the Junkman.' Patti sang as well as she does now. And I thought she was very attractive.

I was not alone in that opinion, lots of guys wanted to get next to Patti, but it was tough. The Blue Belles were managed by a married couple named the Montagues, and they kept their charges under tight wraps. You couldn't penetrate that barrier for anything. Many young men tried and failed, but I didn't let that discourage me. In fact I was up for the challenge.

Fate intervened, and we found ourselves headlining bill at the Uptown with Patti and the girls. Here was my big chance. Getting to Patti required getting around her chaperones, so I turned on the old charm. During my first meetin with the Montagues, I was the

perfect gentleman. No matter what they said, I answered politely with a soft-spoken "Yes, ma'am," or "No, sir." Their defenses melted, and they finally said, "Oh, let's let Otis come in. He's such a nice boy." I smiled graciously, all the time saying to myself, "I'm going to slow-walk you to death," an old expression that's another way of saying, "I've plotted and I've planned, and I'll take my time, but I'm gonna get there."

Patti and I soon fell in love. She was a very nice girl, but matter-of-fact and dedicated to her career, something I understood and supported. I was in deep. Whenever we had time off, the other guys would say, "Well, we all know where Otis is going to be. He's going to Philly." And they were right. I'd take off for Philadelphia and stay with Patti's family. They treated me very nicely. Of course, that didn't stop us from sneaking away whenever an opportunity came along. All in all, it was a wonderful time.

Not to say we didn't have our problems. One was being able to go out together without being recognized. One day we were visiting one of Patti's friends when word got out in the neighborhood that we were there. Pretty soon the house was surrounded by fans screaming, "One of the Tempts is in there! Patti LaBelle's in there! Let's get their autographs!" We cut our visit short and ducked out the back. The bigger problem, though, was the business. After going weeks without seeing each other, our relationship cooled. I learned from this that when you lead a crazy life, you need a lover who's home when you are, not on the other side of the planet. Patti and I drifted apart.

Georgie Woods recalls: "I ain't tell you about the time I fired the Temptations and sent them home 'cause they were doing bad on stage. The first time they came here I sent them back to Detroit. They were so bad on stage, I said, 'You ain't ready, get out of here.' I said, 'Berry send me my money.' You can put that in the book. I sent them home. I said man I want my money back, these guys were awful. I didn't understand what they were doing. they were probably not as bad as I thought they were. I was used to all that jumping around. The next time I saw them guys I said please let me get the Temps. He called me one day and said, 'I want you to

Georgie and the Uptown

come out here and see something.' I didn't even know they were the same group. They were so dynamite after I undressed them at the Uptown. Berry gave the money back too. I said you can't charge me for that. They were awful. They were just...you know. But the next time I saw those guys I was begging him to get them on the show. Six months later, they had worked and practiced...they haven't looked back since then."



Leandre Jackson Photo

Osiris

No one knows
what tomorrow brings.
Isis watches
as he moves along
"I saw him with
Cecil Moore in
Ida's Restaurant"



The cane rests
in front
Isis understands
and so does Georgie
Osiris waits patiently
to see another Georgie
show at the Uptown

No one knows
What Osiris knows

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Cecil B. Moore, Dr. King, and George

Causeman

The mass movement of Black people in the United States greatly impacted Woods' social consciousness. All of his life he had observed and experienced injustices. He developed ways of fighting them without losing his own dignity, his own self-respect. Yet it was the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950's and 1960's that motivated Georgie to participate in mass activism. There was also the presence of people he considered creditable leaders. The two most frequently mentioned by Woods are Atty. Cecil B. Moore Esq. and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

It is interesting to see Woods attracted to the leadership style of both Moore and King. Atty. Moore was a prominent lawyer in the city of Philadelphia by the beginning of the 1960's. Cecil B. Moore was born in Dry Fork Hollow, West Virginia on April 2, 1915. His father, Dr. Alexander Moore was a prominent physician. His mother, Beulah, was a respected public school teacher. As a fourth generation Black professional, Cecil grew up with the amenities appropriate for his class. By the time Woods met Moore he had spent nearly ten years as a Marine Corps Master Sergeant, and subsequently one of the first Black salesman for Publicker Distillers. His top product was "Old Hickory." Although a liquor salesman, Moore was not hesitant about leading demonstrations to stop the opening of additional bars in his neighborhood. Dr. King already had national prominence when Woods met him.

Q: When did you first meet King?

Woods: I met King at a church. Bill Gray's father introduced me to him at the old Bright Hope Baptist Church and we took pictures with him.

Q: What was your first impression?

A: Well it was like the greatest thing that ever happened. That was like meeting God.

Q: Did you hit it off from the beginning?

CAUSEMAN

A: Yeah. He always called me "Georgia." We got to be real close. He was different from most leaders I met.

Q: What made him different?

A: He was more sincere to me. I felt he was not trying to impress anybody. He never seemed to want to impress people, although he did. He didn't appear to be one that wanted to impress people. He just did what he had to do.

Q: Did Gertrude Barnes (a public school teacher and Civil Rights Causewoman) know him already?

A: Yeah, she knew him before. She's the one who told us how he got the nickname "Mike." 'Cause she used to feed him when he came to town. She fixed all that good food for King. We had a feast at her house whenever he'd come.

Q: Do you remember when King and Cecil were in the house at the same time?

A: I remember that.

Q: Do you remember what happened?

A: Well Cecil had a problem with...in fact most people in Philly have a problem because they always think you're trying to do something to hurt them. The leadership here felt that if King got to be well liked here it would take away from them. King was afraid. He'd say, "I'm not coming up there." I'd say, why? I'd say, are you going to let people tell you what to do? I said, can't nobody tell you when you can come someplace and when you can't go. I said that's what you're fighting for, and if you do that then you might as well not be fighting for anything. If you're going to let these people, these "Negroes," tell you not to come here then you need to quit. Ask Sam Evans. You're going to let somebody tell you that you can't come to Philadelphia?

Q: Was King timid about coming?

A: Yeah, he was timid. He was kind of meek. But then the meek shall inherit the earth they say. In Selma, Alabama they gave him a fit. King didn't want to march. Then the young guys said, "Well we're going to do it." Then he said, "I have no choice, I have to go." I was there.

Q: You sided with King. Why didn't you go along with the young guys?

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

A: Half of them were crazy. They were trying to upstage him. They were just looking for the spotlight and that kind of thing. I never agreed with that because I knew he was the one. Then all of a sudden somebody comes out of the woodwork and says I can do it better. I have a problem with that. He's the leader. Let him be the leader. I was always in the background. I never tried to upstage him or get in front of him, even though when he came here (and I have pictures that I can show you), they were looking like they were ready to tear me apart, but not King.

Q: Would you say that Gertrude Barnes really played a bigger role than most people think?

A: She played a very big role. There's a certain clique here. You have that clique in Atlanta. You had it in New York. I guess you have it in every city. There are certain people, the Black power brokers, who just try to keep things like the white power brokers do. People like Gertrude Barnes, myself, they're not going to let us be included. I know that so I just go around them.

Q: Do you think that could have changed? Could you have done something different to make people see you different?

A: I don't know.

Q: One thing that upper-class people may say is that you wouldn't attend a lot of their social functions. They may say you spent more time with the poor kids in the "ghetto."

A: I never did. I never did go, because they were a bunch of phonies anyway. That's all they were, hypocrites. I knew what they were about, they weren't about nothing but themselves.

Q: How did you learn so quick?

A: It's easy. You just watch a person and you can tell when they are for real and when they're not. But when houses were in trouble, when people were burned out, I was the one that went to their aid. These people weren't there. They had more to give than I had. But they never gave nothing. They only did for themselves.

Q: One time you gave 5000 turkeys away.

A: Oh yeah, one year we gave food to 54,000 families.

CAUSEMAN

Q: Do you have an estimate of how much you've given and raised for civil rights activities?

A: Probably a million. I never figured that out. We did finance a lot of different organizations. When Cecil's daughter needed money for college, I went to the bank and got it out for her. I don't talk about it, but it was that sort of deal. She'll never know unless it comes out in the book. When Joe Frazier came home from the Olympics, and didn't have any food for his family, I bought him food. I'm talking about the Heavyweight champion. I gave his manager \$500 dollars on stage at the Uptown to buy food for his kids that didn't have any food. I don't brag about it, but that's what happened. I asked Joe one day, "Joe, did you ever get the money?" He said, "Yeah I got it." I don't think he did. I don't think his manager gave it to him, but I know I gave it on the Uptown stage for him to get food for his kids.

Q: What made you so willing to give so much?

A: Well if I have more than what I need, and somebody else needs it, why not give. That's my way of looking at it.

Q: Was that your belief all the time, even when you didn't have much?

A: Yeah. I shouldn't have done it. 'Cause sometimes when you give too much or do too much they don't respect or appreciate it. They take it for granted and think you were supposed to do it. I ain't supposed to do nothing but save my behind. That's all I'm supposed to do. I don't have no obligations to nobody but that kid there, and that kid in Lakewood, New Jersey, and my other two daughters. That's all. If you can help it's always good to help.

Q: Was the group you helped to organize a split from the NAACP?

A: We started a group called North Philadelphia United because we wanted to do something up in North Philadelphia to try to change the way people were living there, and this would have been a way to do it, but you had to have broad based support before you could make changes. Before you can make changes you have to have somebody to help you make the changes. That would have been a way we could have changed North Philadelphia. We had a lot of police brutality at the time, I mean cops running around like gangsters doing anything they wanted to do. And nobody could challenge the police, and that's why I got hooked up with Cecil, because at least he would stand up to the way police were treating people, and beating up on people, and kicking doors down. I liked him for that. He didn't take no stuff off the cops. He was right when he did it (I'm not saying go out there and beat up police) and that's why I joined in with him.

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

Q: Essentially you came in as the head of the Freedom Fund?

A: Well no, I was vice-president. From the very beginning I got to be vice-president in 1962. That's how he got in. I helped him get in. Me and him ran. I ran with him. He was running for president, I was running for vice-president.

Q: Did you campaign together?

A: Yeah. It was only about four or five of us because we didn't have that many members at that time. But I talked to people everyday. I reached the whole city. He couldn't. I'd say boo and the whole town hears.

Q: He had run before in 1959 against Higginbotham?

A: But Higginbotham left. I wasn't there at that time. Higginbotham was my lawyer. He he was the first lawyer I ever had.

Q: What was Irv Nahan's role?

A: He was the one who helped me book the shows. Irv Nahan would go and book acts that I couldn't get, places where I couldn't go. He was a front man. White folks like to talk to white folks. He was a manager. He managed acts.

Q: Who did he manage?

A: Jerry Butler for a while. He had Betty King, the Drifters, Aretha Franklin, and a few others until the mafia got to him and took him on a ride and threatened to kill him and turned him loose. He got rid of Aretha, he got rid of Jerry, Sam and all of the guys. He even had some of the Motown acts. He had a big stable. He was in Philly down here at 22nd and Spruce. Then on Market Street.

Q: So by the late 1960's he's out of it?

A: He had to get out of it or die.

Q: So by that time he didn't have to go around and do that?

A: He was still around. I still used him.

Q: You don't believe in cutting people out do you George?

A: Not if you're loyal to me, I'll never leave you. I'll dump somebody that ain't loyal in a minute, if I get a chance. But he was loyal, and he didn't cheat me. He may have cheated me and I didn't know it, but at least I didn't know it.

CAUSEMAN

Q: Did he find an accountant for you also?

A: No. Any legal problems I had Higginbotham handle. He was my lawyer, I had him on retainer. He was the first lawyer I ever had period.

Q: How did you choose Higginbotham?

A: I kept hearing about him. It's one of those things that I can't explain, but he was the one that I used. He was the the first one. He was a nice young man, too. He was a good guy, and he was very good, and very bright. He worked for Austin Norris. Cliff Scott was my lawyer after Higginbotham. After Clifford Scott then Bill Brown.

Q: How was he different from the others?

A: Scott and Higginbotham were two of the finest attorneys I ever met. The rest of them I wouldn't trust as far as I could throw that thing there. Because most lawyers are crooks. Even when you pay them they're going to get you. Lawyers and doctors to me are the worst things around. A lawyer, if you have a case he's going to settle on the side, and you don't know what he got. A doctor ain't going to make you well 'cause you won't come to see him no more. You have to be careful with both of them. If you have a good doctor and a good lawyer you have a jewel. But to find one is very difficult.

George has mentioned how Cecil B. Moore's candidacy for president of the NAACP inspired his active participation in the Civil Rights Movement. What is important to point out is that both Moore and Woods were Causeman long before they became activists in the NAACP. Both of them were loop-linked to the masses of Black people. Moore was prominent as a nationally known criminal attorney. Woods, known as a broadcaster with deep seated concern for his listeners and admirers.

One of the areas that demand further investigation is the whole relationship between Black media personel and the Civil Rights Movement: In Philadelphia, Georgie Woods is an exemplary case study. He was singled out for distinction by both Moore and Martin Luther King Jr. In a speech delivered at an annual convention of the National Association of Radio and Television Announcers, King is most explicit:

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

"I valued a special opportunity to address you this evening for in my years of struggle, both north and south, I have come to appreciate the role which the radio announcer plays in the life of our people, for better or for worse, you are opinion makers in the community. And it is important that you remain aware of the power which is potential in your vocation. The masses of Americans who have been deprived of educational and economic opportunity are almost totally dependent on radio as their means of relating to the society at large. They do not read newspapers, though they may occasionally thumb through Jet. Television speaks not to their needs but to upper-middle class America. One need only recall the Watts tragedy and the quick adaptation of the 'Burn Baby Burn' slogan to illustrate the pervasive influence of the radio announcer on the community. But while the establishment was quick to blame the tragedy of Watts most unjustly on the slogan of Magnificent Montague, it has not been ready to acknowledge all of the positive features which grow out of your contributions to the community. No one knows the importance of Tall Paul White and the massive nonviolent demonstration of the youth of Birmingham in 1963; or the funds raised by Purvis Spann for the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964; or the consistent fundraising and voter education done for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Civil Rights Movement by Georgie Woods, my good friend from Philadelphia. Tonight I want to say thank you not just to these few, but to all of you who have given leadership to our people in thousand of unknown and unsung ways. We would certainly not have come so far without your support. In a real sense, you have paved the way for social and political change by creating a powerful, cultural bridge between black and white. School integration is much easier now that they share a common music, a common language, and enjoy the same dances. You introduced youth to that music and created a language of soul and promoted the dances which now sweep across race, class, and nation."

What is clear is that Martin Luther King recognized as did Cecil B. Moore, that Black radio was an essential tool in the movement for democratic rights in the United States.

Perhaps it is necessary to examine the platform Moore and Woods ran on in 1962. It details the range of concerns they wished to have the NAACP address. However, a brief account of Moore's career prior to the time of the 1962 election is in order.

One account by a Black marine indicates some associative links between Cecil's corps experiences and his leadership later.

"In 1947 he was transferred to Fort Mifflin near Philadelphia as Sgt. Major of a detachment whose prime mission was ammunition security. Many Philadelphians think there is a connection, for he has been explosive ever since."

Evidence indicates an explosive aspect of his personality at least as early as his college days. There was also a sense of restlessness and impatience with the lack of progress Blacks were making in gaining equity and parity in a society they had given their lives to defend. Several people who knew him when he first arrived in Philadelphia note that he was concerned about the plight of the "Philadelphia Negro" from the moment he arrived.

Although he was still in service he was associated with the "Veterans for Dilworth" in the Mayoral Race of 1947. The fact that the candidate, Richardson Dilworth, was an ex-marine must have weighed heavily in his favor.

One of the things that gave Moore entry into the Philadelphia Black community was his extensive network of associates. His former classmate, Dr. Eugene Waymon Jones, was Executive Director at the Heritage House which was the hub of social and cultural activities in the Black community at that time. He also renewed association with graduates of West Va. State and Bluefield State College. He knew ex-marines who had settled in Philadelphia, in addition to his Kappa Fraternity brothers. Hopson and Evelyn Reynolds were among his early associates during the 1940's. Evelyn was a society columnist with a local Black newspaper, as well as a poet. Hopson, an ex-state legislator, was active in the Republican Party at both the national and local levels.

By 1949, Cecil was beginning his first year of law school at Temple University, then located in the Gimble Building at 9th and Market Streets. There are those who still recall how resplendently he was dressed in his Marine Corps uniform as he attended classes. Moore once said, "I wanted to go to law school since the time I was born."

Contrary to popular belief, Cecil became a member of the Philadelphia NAACP at least as early as 1951. He was a member of a "Car Give Away Committee" that year. During this same time period he was often in the news with prominent entertainers. He and "Zeke" arranged a special appearance by Duke Ellington at the Marine Birthday Annual Ball. Cecil maintained his long-time interest in the Big Band Jazz Era - Fletcher Henderson, Lucky Millender, Count Basie and Duke Ellington were among his

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

favorites. These artists he often saw at the Earle Theatre, a major venue for popular entertainment. Cecil and Zeke also became members of the Inkosia Club, a private night spot in South Philadelphia. Bea Bea's Barbecue was a favorite eating place which Cecil discovered during his first weeks in town.

In August 1951 Cecil left the Marine Corps after serving nine years. Cecil, his wife Theresa, and young Cecily were at this time living in North Philadelphia. The next year Cecil became a Republican Committeeman, in part through his association with Hopson Reynolds. Around this time, two West Virginians, Cecil B. Moore and Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, renewed an old acquaintance and founded the "Committee Against Juvenile Delinquency and Its Causes." The committee often met at the Chesterfield Hotel and Miller Memorial Baptist Church. They both had as their mentor, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the Democratic Congressman from Harlem.

Once he left the Corps, Cecil became one of the first Black salesmen for Publicker Distillers. His top product was "Old Hickory." Ten thousand cards were printed and mass distributed. He became intimately aware of bar room culture slightly differently from that portrayed in the Sociologist Elijah Anderson's book. Lifelong friends were met there; early supporters of his causes were there. Although he was a liquor salesman, Moore was not hesitant about leading demonstrations to stop the opening of additional bars in his neighborhood. He exercised direct action, a tactic he later employed to even greater advantage. Moore seemed to have worked out a formula for the unity of opposites. Although a Republican, he was closely associated with then Attorney and now Common-Pleas Court Judge Harvey N. Schmidt. In 1952 Schmidt attempted to win a Democratic nomination for a seat in the State Legislature. He recalls Moore joining him in a post-election analysis. "I can remember back in 1952 when I ran for the legislature, my opponent (George Schwartz) beat me out by fourteen votes. Cecil and I spent all the night after the polls closed, into the wee hours of the morning, going around to all the polling places throughout the entire district, writing down the votes. "Moore, the Republican and Schmidt, the Democrat,

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shared a common goal - political empowerment for the Black community. Schmidt's relentless fight for equity and power within the Democratic party had at least one daily newspaper to refer to him as a "West Philadelphia Rebel."

In 1953, Moore completed his training at Temple University Law School. The next move was to pass the Pennsylvania Bar Examination. Judge Lisa Richette had a vivid recall of the future lawyer:

"Cecil Moore was probably the only bar candidate who sat through the six week Levin Cram Course without once taking a single note. I know, because I sat near him and looked up from my own note taking study with amazement this relaxed, faintly amused figure, feet up on the desk, seemingly wool-gathering. Cecil was not posing; he was an extraordinary listener; his mind was an ever expanding treasure palace into which fact, perception, and feeling were permanently sorted, classified and stored. Of course, he passed and went on to a meteoric career in courtrooms high and ordinary."

Two hours after passing the Pennsylvania Bar, Moore obtained his first legal case. The climate for Black lawyers practicing in Philadelphia could not be considered optimum. William T. Coleman became the first known Black attorney in Philadelphia to become a member of a major white firm in Dilworth, Paxson, Kalish and Levy. Other Black lawyers practiced as sole practitioners, space sharers, associates and only occasionally partners. Judge Harvey N. Schmidt and former Judge Raymond Pace Alexander were among the first to establish firms. There was the added problem of being unable to rent office space within a fine block radius of City Hall. Cecil Moore was one of the first to gain space in the prime market area. Vernon Marks, a longtime associate of Moore's and currently Director and Community Planner in City Council's Community Development unit recently recalled that Cecil Moore had the white bail broker, Walter Rosenbaum to rent space for his office in the commercial Trust Building across from City Hall. His first law associate was Attorney Leslie P. Hill, Mrs. Dennis was the efficient Office Manager.

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As a bold, brilliant and courageous criminal lawyer, Moore quickly became one of the most active attorneys in the City of Philadelphia. Many of his early clients were the people of North Philadelphia who had known him in their churches, political meetings, block clubs, associations, bars, etc. His easy rapport with a wide range of people was certainly an asset in acquiring new clients. It was not long before people were saying "he is the winningest criminal lawyer in town."

One of the cases that catapulted him into a sustained media attention was the famous "in-Ho-Oh" case involving a Chinese student from the University of Pennsylvania. Other rape and murder cases, many of them remarkable wins, helped to more solidly establish his reputation. In 1957 Moore began to parlay this notoriety into a race for a congressional seat. This followed his 1956 Republican Presidential Convention attendance as a delegate. Robert N.C. Nix, an attorney and a Democrat won the race thus become the first Black Congressman from Pennsylvania. One of the unique things in Moore's campaign was the introduction of members of North Philly's gang structure ("The Valley" and "29-D" among others) to an organized political campaign. They became opinion makers among their confreres who registered for the first time.

In 1959, Moore mounted an unsuccessful campaign to become President of the Philadelphia branch of the NAACP. His opponent was a former assistant district attorney and at the time a practicing attorney - A. Leon Higginbotham became the first Black and youngest person to be named Commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission. Later that year, Cecil Bassett Moore initiated his campaign for Presidency of the Philadelphia NAACP.

In June 1962 a nationally newspaper credited Cecil Moore with having the largest criminal law practice in the United States. This did much to further widen his national reputation. On the local front he gained much publicity in the Bond Bread Bakery Homicide Case and the so-called, "Wolf Pack Rape" case alleged to have taken place in Fairmount Park. By this time he was being credited with successfully preventing at least fourteen tap-rooms from moving into Black neighborhoods where it was considered

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undesirable. He won the right of residents to picket a taproom in arguments before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

He employed the use of picketing and injunctions to force a merger of a negro local with the all white motion picture projection operators union. In organizing what was becoming an even more class and caste stratified Black community, Moore's previously mentioned mass-based activities in conjunction with his serving as the Program Chairman of the Barristers Club (an organization of local Black attorneys) and representative of the North Philadelphia Equal Justice Commission, served him well.

Although it is not commonly acknowledged, Cecil Moore ran for Presidency of the NAACP on a well planned, rationale, bold and inclusive platform.

To detail fully this program would go beyond the space allotted for its assessment. However, it is necessary to single out several areas that appealed to a broad mass of people:

"Housing - Discrimination in housing lends itself to segregation in schools. We are primarily concerned with the low-income home buyer who is not protected by the recent order of President Kennedy."

"Labor and Employment - We propose to accomplish integration in the unions and break up the agreements between employers and unions which do segregate using the same tactics that we used in connection, with the motion picture projectionists' union, that is picketing, injunction and boycott."

"Police Brutality - ... We would propose as a solution that as part of their training they be taught the basic principles of a democracy, that is respect for personal right and freedom, but until that is accomplished we would suggest the use of every legal measure including the use of the recently enacted legislation permitting suits against the City as well as prosecution under the Federal Civil Rights Statute."

"Education - We intend to attack the districting, employment and curriculum policies of the Philadelphia Board of Education and to encourage the use of textbooks which will accurately portray the Negro's contribution to the country."

"We propose the use of the NAACP to help Negro migrants

adjust to urban living. A great many of the recent migrants to Philadelphia, most of whom are Negro and other minority groups are the victims of sharp practices by credit officers, landlords and neighborhood grocers. We will attempt to furnish legal advice and prompt reporting of the offenders as well as instructions to the newcomers.”

On the basis of this projection and Moore's reputation as a community leader and celebrated lawyer he was elected President of the NAACP in December, 1962. He immediately issued a proclamation:

“We are serving notice that no longer will the plantation system of white men appointing out leaders exist in Philadelphia. We will expect to be consulted on all community issues which effect our people. We are not declaring war. These issues have been settled by the constitution. I will expect my people to stand up and be counted among the believers of the NAACP or have their names listed as an enemy of democracy.”

Shortly after this sharp declaration, Moore issued a devastating attack against what he considered the enemies of the mass based black community. He specified them as being the collective white power structure and collaborators generally identified as part of the pigmentocracy.

He chose as his first target a Ford Foundation sponsored Philadelphia Council for Community Advancement (PCCA) established to operate in North Philadelphia - Moore's special domain. Moore's concern about its leadership and direction was stated thusly:

“The community which PCCA will seek to rehabilitate is populated, primarily by Negroes. Generally they are Negroes dedicated to what author James Baldwin has described as ‘the all but hopeless estrangement between the American Negro and white man.’ PCCA's initial appointments have not helped the situation. Samuel Dash is a highly competent lawyer, but hardly any authority on the social or economic rehabilitation of Negroes. Temple University's Dr. Niebuhr is a reputable social psychologist, but a Theorist without practical experience with the minority group he will now research. Manuel Kaufman brings the first

professional social welfare know how to the organization; however, Dash, Niebuhr and Kaufman are all white men whom the community symbolically blames for its ills. Their appointments say to the community involved, 'These nice white men are going to teach you to be nice, become educated, earn money and live in decent homes.' Their appointments also say, 'Your own people are incompetent of rendering these services to you.' This is pouring salt on an old open wound."

Months later two blacks were added to PCCA's staff. But before that Moore received a response from fifteen (15) members of the black professional class including several lawyers, ministers, physicians, politicians and a newspaper publisher. They included some to the best known names within what some termed, "established Negro leadership." His rejoinder was clearly designed as an offensive mechanism of control, an effective tactic Moore employed to his benefit.

Five months after taking office, Moore initiated a massive campaign of picketing at the construction site of the new Municipal Services Building. This gave him an excellent opportunity to demonstrate what he considered duplicity between the City government and the building trade unions in discriminating against blacks. It was an issue that gained widespread support late in June 1963 when he organized picketers to stop the construction of a school at 31st and Dauphin Streets.

The picketing at the school construction site lasted for a greater portion of the summer of 1963. Several bloody confrontations between the demonstrators and police officers further heightened the intensity within that community. Moore's leadership attracted a large number of young, determined blacks intolerant of traditional black gradualists' leadership. The character of the movement began to change at 31st and Dauphin. Certainly the membership character of the local NAACP changed drastically in the spring and summer of 1963. Many blacks who never chose to join any civil rights or civic organizations became members of the NAACP. As the membership base broadened, Moore's power base automatically expanded.

By the end of his first year, Moore was reported to have



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., P.A

Cecil marching in demonstration in the South



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

Cecil B. Moore at his campaign headquarters in North Philadelphia, 1977



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

Cecil B. Moore leaving the County Prison, 1967



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

**Cecil B, Moore with Shaykh Muhammad in City Hall waiting
for hearing**



Bob Klein of WDAS, presents a Plaque to Cecil B. Moore during one of George's "Freedom Shows" at the Uptown in the 1960's.

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increased the NAACP local membership to 32,000. Judge Juanita Kidd Stout and Kathryn Woodard, Editor and Publisher of the *Philadelphia Independent*, must be credited with helping in this membership drive. Cornerstone Baptist Church was the scene of many mass meetings and membership campaigns.

In recent interviews with the record store owner and longtime NAACP activist, Bruce Webb and the Trinidadian car salesman, Merv Caruth, we get a fuller picture of Woods during this time period. They illuminate the circumstances surrounding Woods' public radio and stage career and an equally public civil rights career that led to several arrests.

Q: How do you first recall Georgie Woods?

Merv: I'm originally from Trinidad, Port au Spain. While I was in Trinidad Sam Cooke came into Trinidad to perform. Now Trinidad is like Payton Place. Everybody knows one another. Being back in Trinidad I thought that America was the very same way. So I got the chance to meet Sam Cooke and I said I will be going into the United States. He said, 'Where?' I said Philadelphia. He said, "I know someone in Philadelphia, George Woods." Just like that. I never pursued it or anything like that when I came into Philadelphia. So I was taking some courses at Pennsylvania School of Technology and after a while I became destitute...no money, no nothing, In the same interim I used to listen to Georgie Woods program, Mary Mason, and there was another guy by the name of Joe Rainey. He had a talk show at 11 o'clock at night. So one day I was downtown in Center City listening to his program. I said, there's something about this guy that seems to be genuine.

Q: How could you tell?

M: I don't know I just got the vibes. On this day I was in Center City in four (4) inches of snow, the top of my shoe was shining and I had cardboard inside. That was the sole of the shoe. I was hungry, and I said I've got to do something. I was at the point of destitution. So I walked from Center City to Edgeley Road at the radio station WDAS. He had a program that came on from 6 o'clock to 10. When I walked into the studio, they were sitting at the table. George Woods, a guy by the name of John Bandy, known as Lord Fauntleroy, another disc jockey by the name of Chuck James. He had just got off because I think his slot was from 2 to 6. Joe Rainey was there also. So I walked in there, with all the cold running from my nostrils and he turned to me...I can never forget. He was wearing tan flat shoes, tan socks, and he had on a sort of coffee type pants, light color, and a tan shirt, short sleeve. And he was smoking a cigarette with a holder. I was

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looking at him, talking to him and I'm looking at the cigarette and he said why are you looking at the cigarette? And I said I don't smoke. So now he took the cigarette from the filter and he said this will not harm you. Look at the nicotine, see how the filter is absorbing the nicotine. So he said, "Son what are you doing here?" I said, "I am down and out and I want a job." So he turned to me and he said will a hundred and fifty dollars a week be enough for you? I said you got to be kidding. I thought heaven came! So he went to Joe Rainey and Joe Rainey called a gentleman by the name of Costell Vaughn. This guy was some type of big shot in Philadelphia. He got on the phone and said Costell I need a job for this youngster. Just like that. Never met me before. Costell said let me get back to you. He told me to call him the next day. He said I have some information for you; go to Penn Fruit, (that was on City Line Ave. where they have the Acme market now). And I got the job there. Chuck James was just getting ready to leave, he was driving an Oldsmobile '98, and he turned to Chuck James and said take this youngster home for me. And he reached into his pocket and took out a dollar bill and he said, 'here call me back the next day'. Now I spoke to him about 2 weeks later and he said how is everything going? I said it's kind of hard to do my studies, cause I have to get outside and pull the carts, and it was long hours and what not. Shortly after that I got a job...a month later I got a job on 52nd and Chestnut. There was a men's store there by the name of Brait's Men's Store. At that time they had the shows going on at the Uptown Theatre. He came in there one Friday morning, he and Del Shields, and at that time after every act they would change the silk socks and the silk shirts and what not. And they came in there that morning and they spent something like \$400. That was a lot of money back in 1962. So they came in and bought all of these silk ties and silk shirts and things like that. So we got to the counter and I'm getting ready to write up the sale, and a Jewish guy walked over and pushed me away. The guy's name is Max Wiener. Not the same Max Wiener. So George turned to the guy and said, why are you doing this? What is he doing wrong? So Max said, well he isn't in the union. So he can't get credit for the sale. So George said he started it and let him complete it. So I wrote up the sale package and everything. When they were getting ready to leave he called me over to a corner and he said don't be scared. He asked, why aren't you in the union? So I said, I tried no less than 5 times, and I could not get in the union. He turned to me and asked, do you want to get in the union? I said sure. That was a Friday. Wednesday there was a picket line in front of the store. There was a picket line from almost Market street to Chestnut street. That was the first time I got to know who Cecil Moore was. That was Wednesday. Thursday I got into the union. The next day I got into the Amalgamated union.

Q: Describe the scene inside the store when the people began to arrive?

M: I think I got a call on Tuesday, Mr. Brait got a call on Tuesday informing him that the store would be picketed. I was not even aware of it. Another thing

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I was scared, because I was here illegally, [No green card]. So most of my stay in Philadelphia had to be very low key. So anyway the picket line was in front of the store. Brait's sells nice clothes to black people, but they don't want to have a black person in the union. The next day I got a call from a fellow by the name of Bobby Califano. I got down there and they signed me up for the union. It was not until I was signed up and I saw what the benefits were like, that I knew why they didn't want me in the union. So at that point and time I tried to get back to George, but he was the main attraction, a very popular person...I remember I went up to the studio one day and he asked, is everything alright. Up comes the march on Washington!

G: This is the first time I heard this story. I had forgot.

M: The March on Washington...I wanted to go on the march because of him.

Q: You had heard him talk about it on the air?

M: Not only that but I don't know what it is but I just took a liking to the man. I cannot say that he is my role model because my father is my role model, but he has some beautiful attributes. So the March on Washington, no money again, and I heard he chartered ten or 17 buses to leave from the Uptown Theatre. At that time I called him at the station and he said, "you be there tomorrow at 6:30 or 7 o'clock and you will be on the bus." At the Uptown Theatre it was a massive crowd.

Q: Describe what the crowd was like?

M: The buses were lined up in front of the Uptown Theatre. He had Herb Staton...[George's assistant at the time]

Q: How do you remember the names?

M: Because you see I am following this man. So I went there that morning, and I went to Herb and said, "Herb I want to get on this bus and go to Washington." So Herb said, "you have to go to this person and give this person your name." I did not want to hear that. So I saw him standing up there, I said, "George I want to go to Washington." He said you walk out there and any bus you see out there that is empty just get on the bus. And that's what I did. Now they had the buses lined all the way down, a whole bunch of buses. The first bus I saw I went right on the bus. And the guy said who are you, and I said, Mr. Woods told me to get on this bus. He said okay. No questions asked. I went to Washington and came back.

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Webb Speaks

Webb: The first two shows that gave me a break was Georgie's and Jimmy Bishop's.

Q: What do you mean the first two shows that gave you a break? Were you selling tickets?

A: No, this is before I started selling tickets. Me and Georgie go back to the NAACP days. I met Jimmy thru Georgie on the picket lines. Jimmy wasn't out there as much as Georgie. Believe me I think this man gave up at least \$300,000 dollars to the NAACP back then. He funded all of them shows. I was in the NAACP, I was the vice-president of the West Philadelphia branch. I know that he paid for the souvenir books, and I told the girl who works for Mary Mason, that they never gave Georgie and Mary their just due. Georgie more so than Mary, because Georgie was there from the start. I know personally, cause I used to see the souvenir book prices. I knew what it cost to book a show. I knew what it cost to have tickets made, and I do believe, not being in his pocket, but I know for all of those Freedom Shows and beyond that for like a 8 or 9 year span, \$300,000 for a black man to give up is a lot of money. In his lifetime it's a lot of money, but when you give it up in that short a span of time that's dedication.

Woods: And don't get nothing back, and no thanks. But some people remember. See he remembers. There are some people on the street who remember.

A: I told Mary Mason's assistant this no more than three months ago, I said you don't know Georgie and Mary the way I know them. Like when people say he ain't for real....I say let me tell you something, I don't blame him for not being for real no more with you niggers. I tell them in some meetings right now, because when he was out there doing stuff for y'all, you didn't appreciate it. When you put out \$300,000 - \$400,000 dollars, that hurts. I'm talking about feeding people, clothing people. I know people who didn't get on the radio that he gave money to. See I used to be out there promoting records, and I would be out there sometimes...

Woods: I did it all.

A: ...he would come out there, and I could see him coming through the little lobby, folding the money up putting it in his pocket. These weren't no women that you would go to bed with, they weren't the women that were young and fine. They were dirty women. They needed some money. Some of them were fine women that needed some money. Some guys needed some money, and I know some of them might have been lying to him.

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Woods: Oh most of them, a lot of them. [in the background].

Q: At the Uptown?

A: No, no at the radio station. Backstage. I've seen them come back there, 'Georgie I ain't got no food,' and I'd see him hand them some money out the door there. I know personally...I know people...I told George he should stop doing that. We had a couple of fusses about that. \$25, \$100 dollars, and niggers talked about him like a dog. Really talked about him. But people don't realize...as a matter of fact I know his wife even fussed at him about that. His first wife. [Referring to Bernice Davis. Woods' wife of 18 months. They were divorced in 1960] I go back that long, to 1957, '58. When he first came to Philadelphia.

Q: You weren't promoting records at that time were you?

A: I was promoting records at that time. Before I got into retail I was a record promoter.

Q: What record company?

A: It was an independent record company called Progress Distributors.

Q: Where were they located?

A: Broad and Girard. The old Majestic Hotel.

Q: So how did you get into the business initially?

A: Me and a friend of mine used to work together. We tried to form a black casket company together. That went under. See I didn't mess with no drugs, no faggots, and no white women. Those are some of the principles that defeat most of us, that tears most of us down. Drugs, faggots and white women. So he hired me. That was my rule, and still is my rule today. I don't sell no Top paper, no nothing in my store. But I've known people...that ruined the whole thing. There's people that...I don't know if I should say this...Jimmy Walker wouldn't be in business if it wasn't for Georgie.

Q: I thought his brother was a promoter too?

A: No, Melvin was a promoter in New York. He worked for Hobb Records, and he did some little things around New York, but he wasn't really a promoter, promoter.

Q: Not in the same category as Georgie?

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A: No, no. If it wasn't for Georgie, and that boy Jimmy Bishop, (cause he handled the contracts right), but Georgie handled all of the finances. See everybody knew Georgie. Everybody knew him, before Jimmy was big on the radio. But he wasn't big with the groups and the managers and stuff like that. But that boy Jimmy Walker was under Georgie's tail all of the time.

Woods: Put it in the book.

A: Learning the business. I'm not lying. I've even gone so far to tell several people this. I told Mary Mason's assistant, the same thing no more than three months ago. She was trying to figure out Georgie and Mary and how they still survived, and I took her back in history and how sometimes Georgie says over the radio...If he's bitter about something I don't mind, as much as he's done! Cause see he could have gotten shot anytime. And when you're fighting white folks and black folks at the same time that's a hell of a rumble. Then giving up your money, too. First of all it tears up your family life, cause we would be out there in the morning, at night, all hours. He had to be out there in the front, 'cause he was in a different capacity. I would come later on out there. Georgie had to go out there to confront the people. We would be out there in the picket lines, but Georgie would be out there in conversations with the authorities, with the police, with the F.B.I. He was actually out there in the front line. Things like that people don't know about.

Woods: Hey, Webb tell him when I brought the last Jackson 5 concert in here. They didn't want to give y'all tickets. Do you remember that?

A: Once again it was white controlled. The white stores downtown, the ticket outlets wanted to control all the tickets. We had to fight for that.

Woods: I said uh-uh. It wasn't no fight I said this wasn't going to be. It wasn't no fight, I said you're going to give them to the black stores. He made money.

A: As a matter of fact he called Wilson. He didn't say mayor, he said Wilson, Wilson come here. He didn't call him mayor, he called him Wilson.

Woods: I said Wilson come here.

A: I was there.

Q: What did he say to him Mr. Webb?

A: He said it's not fair, we ain't going to have it if the black stores don't get no

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tickets. They changed it right around. They made it some kind of way where we got tickets, and we didn't get all the bad tickets either.

Q: So sometimes they would give the bad ones to y'all huh?

A: They do it right now.

Woods: They give all the black stores bad tickets.

A: The first day tickets go on sale we get the worst tickets. It's still going on right now.

Woods: 'Cause I'm not in the business that's why!

A: King got tickets for MC Hammer, and he got section A. That's all the way down that end. He ain't get nothing on the side course or nothing like that. They're still doing it. I didn't take none. You know what I told them, I don't want none. If I got to start selling my people bad tickets from the start, you sell those last. Those tickets you sell last. That's going on right now. I remember when the Bijou...

Woods: Remember I got locked up there. That's where I got locked up. Me, Milton Street, Dave Richardson, we all got locked up.

Q: What was that all about Bruce?

Woods: The whites wanted to bring in all the black acts, and they didn't want us to have any. They wanted all of it. They didn't want us to have none. They were doing whites and blacks. We had to break that down, but we did it. What happened was the people we tried to help turned out to be worst than the people we were fighting. They cut our own throat. I'm talking about black folks.

Q: That's the disappointing part about it right?

A: Yeah that's the part that makes you bitter. Because you do all of that...

Woods: And then they come along, here comes these little hustlers, and that's what I call them...

A: That's right I call them pimps...

Woods: Pimps and hustlers and bullshit artists, and they cash in on your hard work.

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A: Even the NAACP when they give a show we don't get black tickets, and I'm a member. If they have anything they have right now no black outlet gets tickets. The black student leagues, all of them, they're integrated now, white people laugh with them, talk to them, they're in the classroom...

Q: They won't bring them in here to sell it?

A: No. Me and King, Daz, and Ida's, these were established places. I got tickets right now for shows, but I'm saying those people since they got integrated, whatever it is they think they are, they made it, they don't even get tickets for us.

Woods: They go right downtown. They don't come uptown, they go downtown.

A: They go downtown to buy their tickets. Then they say we're raising money for the black student league, but the white man sells all the tickets. But all that stuff stems from the fact that there is really no threat out there right now. When Georgie was out there it was a threat. It was a threat that he could book a show. It was a threat that Georgie might have a picket line in front of their place. But that's gone now.

Woods: And you know what I say, I'm going to let it stay gone, because they don't appreciate it when you do it.

Q: How early did you realize the negative impact of the internal bickering?

A: I knew that when I was in the NAACP as vice president. I saw the bickering that was going on there in regards to leadership. I remember what happened when we tried to bring King in here. Other leaders said well we can't have that, because they were afraid he would take away their stature here in the city.

Q: That was a turning point for you with Cecil Moore, as a matter of fact from that time on you guys never quite were the same again were you?

A: Well Cecil didn't have all the charisma that everyone thought he had. I had the charisma, I had the following. I brought my following to Cecil and he capitalized on it. That's how it went. I took the kids out of school to picket. They didn't know Cecil. They knew me. They listened to me on the radio. That's how that came about, that's not to take anything away from his leadership, but I'm going to set the record straight how this all came about. These young kids were with me. They were not with Cecil. It was my movement, but I let him take the lead of it 'cause I had the kids with me. I was the one when the riots broke out that they wanted to talk to, and he was there, and I let him be the spokesman,

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cause I didn't want to be up front. But Cecil didn't have anywhere to go without me.

Q: Did you believe this from 1962 when you began campaigning?

A: I was the entertainer, I was the one who had the people. I talked to them everyday on the radio.

Q: So you were conscious of the air waves role in civil rights at that point?

A: Everyday. I didn't have to have a press conference to reach nobody, cause I talked to them everyday. They knew exactly how I felt.

Q: You believe that's why Cecil came to you initially to get your support?

A: Well he knew. He was a smart person. He knew that if he had me he would have every youngster in the city of Philadelphia with him and they were with me. Look at the picture with me and King.

Q: So King and Cecil were different kinds of leaders?

A: Well King was more of a spiritual leader, Cecil was more like a bulldozer.

Q: Was there a need to have both kinds?

A: Yeah, we needed Cecil. Cecil was one who would go in there and knock it down, King would be the one to come in and build it up. There's the difference there.

Q: Did you find that your own personality fit better with a guy like King?

A: Certainly I was more in tune with King. I liked Cecil's boldness. I liked the way he was candid, I liked the way he would address white people. That's why I liked him, because he was not afraid of white people. That's what attracted me to him, because he would stand up to them. Anyone that I looked at that was not able to put his hand in the man's face and say 'you ain't shit motherfucker', then he was that kind of guy. We were trying to get some black anchor people at WCAU on Channel 10. We went to WCAU, and had a meeting there with all the top brass of CBS. We were all around this table, and Cecil got out and jumped up on the table, 'you're going to put some niggers on the air or we're going to close this motherfucker down'.

Q: How did they react?

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A: They turned red as that thing there. But about a week or two weeks later they had a black guy on the air doing news. Jack Jones. They hired...it wasn't much, but it was a little.

Q: The same was true with Greyhound/Trailways. Were you down at Trailways with them?

A: I got locked up with them. There was 19 of us that went to jail.

Q: Weren't you supposed to be going to a football that day or something?

A: We went to the football game.

Q: What happened on that day?

A: It was a Sunday. December 5th. It was a cold day, it was the coldest day of the year. We left the ballgame, I think Johnny Sample was on one of the teams [Baltimore Colts], and we went to picket. They weren't going to hire any black people to drive those buses. And we just went down and laid down on the middle of the street, on that cold street, and they hauled us off to jail, but the next day they gave in. That was Trailways. Greyhound followed suit because they didn't want to have the same thing happen to them. All of these black drivers that ride these buses don't even know how they got there.

Q: Same with air line stewardesses right? [Cecil Moore had a meeting with Airline executives in his office to negotiate the hiring of Blacks in various capacities.]

A: Well we never dealt with the airlines. I don't know how they got to where they are, but I know in the banks how they got black tellers in these banks here. Because they didn't have any, and we said we were going to tie up, we were going to bring all pennies in there and let them count them all day. And that was a threat that we put on, and they started hiring black tellers in these banks. Same with the telephone operators. They didn't have any black operators here. Every phone in town was going to be taken off the hook. Do you think the girls you see in there were put in there just because they look good. Man we fought for that. We threatened them. We're going to take every phone off the hook. If there is a phone in the black neighborhood it's going to be off the hook. And we're going to take all pennies to the bank and let them count them. We're going to take a thousand dollars to the bank every day and let them count it. They hurried and hired some black people.



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

Cecil Moore speaks to demonstrators protesting discrimination at school construction site at 31st & Dauphin, Philadelphia. 1969



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

Cecil Moore addresses picketers at center city construction site 1963

World Radio History



Courtesy George Woods Collection

(l-r) Dr. King and Abernathy join Georgie in the Philadelphia Civil Rights Movement

Mary Mason Speaks

Mary Mason was a Gospel DJ at WHAT in the early 1960's. Her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement dates back to at least 1960. There is a wonderful photograph of Mary and Cecil B. Moore sitting at a table in the Chesterfield Hotel with an illustrated group that included Ernie Harris (owner of the Chesterfield), Mark Hyman of WHAT, Bob Queen of the Pittsburgh Courier, Hot Rod, WHAT, Maseo Young, publicist, Mary Mason, WHAT, Art Powell, Eagles, Bob Montgomery, Ballantine (former boxer), Bernice Thompson, publicist, Jimmy Shorter, President, Maude Roberts, Milliner and Jimmy Brown, Philadelphia Independent. At that time it was said that "An all out drive to get every Negro in North Philadelphia to join the local branch of the NAACP gained momentum." When a 'Special Promotions' committee was organized under the chairmanship of Cecil B. Moore, Esq.

Q: Let us begin by asking you just how and where did you first meet Dr. Martin Luther King?

M: I was fortunate enough to meet Dr. King very early in my life and in his career. It had to do with the selective patronage kind of thing.... Yeah, that's when I first met him.

Q: Did he come on your show at that time or you just met him at that time?

M: No, oddly enough. I never had King on my show in person.

Q: Is that right?

M: Only by phone. That's one of my regrets. As many times as I have had an audience, (both public and private) with Dr. King the one thing I didn't have was him on the show.

Q: Did you tape any of the audiences with him?

M: Oh god. I think I probably have the largest amount of tapes of Dr. King than anybody in this city, maybe in the country.

Q: Is that right?

M: Because you know why? During those days we used reel to reel. And I had this little reel to reel tape machine and every time we even smelled that he was coming in town... Well I kept my tape recorder with me a lot then. It was small.

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The station had gotten it for me. I also had an opportunity to have it with me because I was in the news department. See at one time I was news director of WHAT. I covered everything. And of course in those early days, in the early 60's Dr. King was the person to cover. You know he made quite a few trips to Philadelphia.

Q: Where would he usually stay when he came to Philadelphia?

M: Dr. King stayed at the hotel downtown. He stayed in the earlier, early days at....

Q: At Chesterfield?

M: No.

Q: He never stayed at the Chesterfield hotel?

M: I know for a fact he never did, Dr. King stayed with the Grays. He stayed with Congressman Gray's family. That family is the only family that I know he stayed with.

Q: Was he fairly accessible when you first met him? Was he pretty easy to talk to?

M: Oh yeah. Always. He, I think that I only really began to feel revered to him after his death.

Q: Why is that?

M: Because Martin was so down to earth. He was a Baptist preacher. He was a Georgia person. So he's a southerner. There was a sense of warmth and hospitality you felt for him. For instance, when he got ready to come into town or from wherever he was, he would call. And let me know that he wanted some chicken or some barbecue from Beas. And make sure that Beas was open long enough for him to get his barbecue. You know, that kind of thing. So he was never a celebrity. Even after the Nobel Peace Prize. Even after he became really big. You know, you have to understand something. Until Dr. King was assassinated I never saw him with body guards, as such. Either Bernard Lee would come with him or some associate from Atlanta. He never had the security type regiment of people around him. The privilege he was afforded was Philadelphia police. Teddy Jordan was one of the top people.

Q: Is he still around now?

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

M: Yeah, yeah. He and his wife Hartense. Teddy eventually became the Commissioner of Recreation. And then of course he retired after, he was that under Rizzo. And after Rizzo went out he retired. But Teddy Jordan was the detective who was more or less the head of the team that met Dr. King at the airport and stayed with him and offered security. But he never travelled with a lot of security. That I can recall, and I must of been around him a hundred times. No. But he was always a little person. And I think it is basically because Dr. King knew where his strengths were and he never strayed from that. He knew that the black community and black people were his strength and he knew that he could get his message across through black radio.

Q: So he used that very effectively then, huh?

M: He used it effectively and he used it often. I mean he would call from other cities and give me the information as to what he wanted done in preparation for his visit.

Q: What kind of things would he say in advance what he wanted perhaps?

M: And that's another thing I liked about him. Dr. King never let anybody else make his, he made his own calls.

Not only did Georgie Woods and Mary Mason work with King in Philadelphia, Woods also joined King in the Selma March.

Q: Why did you go to Selma to march?

A: Because King asked me to come down there. He called me on the phone at 11 o'clock.

Q: He personally called you?

A: He called me and said we need help down here. I said we'll be there as soon as we can get a plane. When I got off the air I went to the airport and got on a plane.

Q: So he called you a couple of days before?

A: No it was the same day. I was on the radio working, he called me and said we need help we're going to have this big march, we need people to come down. Will you come down? I said yeah I'll come down. I'll be on the next plane. Lawrence was there with me. He said let's go George. We got on a plane and went to Atlanta. We didn't have any clothes.

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Q: You didn't have any doubt in your mind that was the right thing to do?

A: We just did it because we felt we could change things.

Q: What did you and Lawrence Henry discuss going down there?

A: Well Lawrence Henry was a militant. His family the truant was very militant. They were very militant people. He was very gung ho. I was following him more or less, because he said, "George you gotta go because this is what we gotta do."

Q: Do you feel there is an unspoken anger in black men still?

A: I think there is anger in a lot of them, but there are many who have to conform to whatever is going on. There are a few, I hear a few. But the anger if you don't act on it, it's worthless. You could be made all you want to, but if you don't try to get even you just might as well stay mad. I think that's what happening. I don't see the anger that I used to see in black men. I don't see the militancy. I just don't see that committment anymore. It seems like its a new ballgame, a new world.

Q: When did you see it start falling apart?

A: I saw the change coming right after the riots in the 60's. Then they changed because they had to put something in effect, so that this kind of thing could never take place again. They had to put something in place. Everybody had a car in the garage, they had food on the table, they had a job, and they were just satisfied. And they had to make it so that the people couldn't march, couldn't demonstrate. They couldn't participate in many ways that was anti-social. So what they did, in my opinion, was stifle the movement. They had to make things so difficult so that people would not think about demonstrating, would not think about rioting, all they'd be thinking about is trying to pay some rent, trying to buy some food and buy some clothes, and probably get their kids educated. This is what the system has done. And that's why you have so few of the kind of demonstrations that we used to have back in the day. And they had to have ways to do that. How do you do things like that? You bring drugs into a neighborhood. back in those days I had never seen dope. So they figured if you're on dope and you're high you're not going to worry about nothing else but getting high. They had to bring all this dope and drugs into the black community, half of the people are stewed up on drugs, their minds are messed up after the Woodstock crapping. This is what has messed up the minds of a lot of people. That's why you don't have that kind of concentration that you had then. People get high they don't go out and demonstrate. They get high and forget all about it. Forget about all the problems in the world. Make you forget about eating. Anything that can make you don't want to eat you know what it

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

will do for you. So that's a problem. So they had to do that. Because we had gang wars, we used to have little kids running around the street killing each other. They gave them some dope and they stopped killing each other and started fighting over the dope. All over the country. Not just here. NY, Chicago LA. This is what they did. They brought dope in to control the gang kids. That's about the early 70's.

Q: When you and Cecil went to that meeting with the Moroccos what motivated you to meet with the gang leaders?

A: Cause they listened to me on the radio every night. When they were going to have a gang war they would call me and tell me, "we're going to get Lex street, and we're going to get Norris street." Every night on the radio. The police could see where the gang wars were going to be from the radio. They would call in and say, "we're going to do them in tonight, or we're going to do this."

Q: So they all knew you?

A: Every gang leader in the town knew me. They didn't bother me because I was neutral to them. They all listened to the radio. That's all they had, they didn't have all this bullshit they have out here now scattered all over. They had one place to go and you had everybody together. You don't have that now, because you have one over here, the guy over there got four, some other guy got five, it's all messed up. Now you can't get 10 people together if you're going to have a ...whatever.

Q: What about Freedom Smitty and Freedom George and those guys?

A: Freedom Smitty was part of that. Freedom George. They were young. They were all in gangs. But they were there. They were like the young soldiers that we needed... the energy, and they listened to me on the radio. These were my listeners. I recruited them into the movement.

Q: What role did Kitty Woodard play in your development?

A: Well she was close to Cecil, and she had the newspaper. She would give a lot of publicity to the movement. She was very supportive of the NAACP, and she was very conscious of what was going on. To have that newspaper like that it was like having a friend that could always get you some kind of public relations. And that's what she was.

Q: Was the Tribune relationship different?

A: No, it was very good. We've always had a good relationship with the Philadelphia Tribune. I'd say without the Philadelphia Tribune... they were one

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of the first ones to ever write anything about me in the first place. Before the other newspapers.

Q: You don't show up in the white press until the early 60's?

A: Well they still don't do that much, they didn't do that much, but it was better then than it is now. They don't do anything now, except something that's negative that black people do. I was telling the editor's from the Inquirer yesterday that they need to focus on some of the positive things in the black community instead of the negative things. I told them that yesterday on the radio. Not that they're going to do it.

Q: In the March on Washington it said that you got several buses, I don't know how many there were 8 or 10?

A: Well we had 10 or 12.

Q: Who paid for those buses?

A: I collected money from the record industry.

Q: How did you go about doing it?

A: I asked them. I said we want to take some buses down to Washington. Aside from what they're doing with the NAACP, cause I don't approve of the way they're handling it so I'll take my own buses. I didn't want them to just get caught up in their throng. I took my own buses. I didn't need them. They were doing it all haphazard.

Q: How were they doing it?

A: I don't know cause I didn't pay that much attention, because I was busy with my own buses. We had about 15 buses. We had a whole bunch of people. Everybody that wanted a record played on the radio.

Q: Used a little muscle on them?

A: It wasn't muscle, it was just they wanted a record played on the radio, hey help me get these buses here. Some people needed money for clothes or food, I would call on these people and that's how I was able to do it. When I wanted to do a show to raise money for the NAACP or whoever I'd call on them and they would do it. I'd say y'all want your records played, hey come on in with that. And that's how it happened. I didn't threaten anyone. They knew what to do.

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

Q: In 1960 that was the first what they call 'payola' thing right? Did you have to go to Washington during that time period?

A: That was 1958.

Q: You had only been on the air about 5 years, yet you were popular enough...

A: Yeah I was big enough, I could break a record by looking at it.

Q: How did you break a record?

A: Play them.

Q: But how did you know that was going to reach...

A: I didn't. The people. I played it on the air and if the people liked it they'd say we like it, and if they say they don't like it then I don't play it.

Q: So you would ask them to call in?

A: I didn't ask them to do anything. I just played the record. And they'd say, 'oh play that again.' And I'd say we got one here. That's how I did it.

Q: Is that how you would judge?

A: I would go to different places where music was played, jukeboxes, and bars and restaurants and I would listen to what they put a nickel in the jukebox to play. If they'd pay a nickel to hear it, they'll listen to it free on the radio. I knew what they wanted. That's what they wanted if they'd pay a nickel.

Q: Now who told you how to do it that way?

A: Nobody, I just observed that. And I'd go to record stores and see what they were buying, and then play it on the air.

Not only were the air waves full of movement accounts, but also newspapers captured first hand battle front reports such as the one filed by Georgie Woods. One of the most vivid accounts of George during this period captures his stintilating experiences in Selma, Alabama. The Philadelphia Independent carried this story: By Georgie Woods

Everyone today is talking about the heroism of the Rev. James Reeb, the Unitarian minister from Boston who died a martyr in Selma, Ala., fatally beaten by white hoodlums because he and two white companions dared enter a Negro restaurant with colored friends.

But, although Rev. Reeb died a martyr to the cause of civil rights, hundreds

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of other acts of personal heroism were performed in Selma during the single 48-hour period I spent there. I know, because eight white ministers were willing to sacrifice their own lives to save mine.

It happened when Lawrence Henry, a Negro free lance photographer who had come to Selma with me, and I were stranded at a deserted airfield about 10 miles on the outskirts of the city, awaiting the arrival of two private airplanes which were to fly us back to Atlanta, Ga.

With us at the airport were eight white ministers from Boston, who had come to Selma to participate in street demonstrations in support of civil rights and voting equality.

Each airplane had a capacity for six persons, meaning that Lawrence, three ministers and myself would share one airplane and the five remaining ministers would share the other. When we reached the airport only one private plane was waiting; the other had not yet arrived.

As we stood on the airfield wondering when the other craft would arrive so we could all leave, it occurred to me that our lives might be in danger if racist hoodlums or bigots were to arrive at the airport before our plane did.

My foreboding of impending evil proved to be true; minutes after our little party drove up in two separate taxi cabs, a souped up jalopy bearing two white youths roared into the airfield.

There was an obvious air of tension as one of the youths shouted: "Look, there's two Niggers with those ministers. Let's shoot them!"

Then, as I stared with a kind of incredulous fascination, I saw one of the youths raise a sawed-off shotgun to his shoulder and squint through a peep-sight with the muzzle extended out of the window. For a brief instant I stared into the double barrels of sure death.

Then, all six ministers deliberately walked toward the auto, placing their bodies between us and the shotguns of the two white hoodlums.

"Quick," one of the ministers said, "You and Lawrence get into the airplane. Don't worry about us. They would sooner shoot a Negro than a minister."

Lawrence and I hesitated, contemplating the fate of the brave men of God who would have sacrificed their own lives to save ours. Then, while we stood hoping and praying for a miracle, the two youths suddenly started up the motor of their hot-rod and roared away.

Today, safe at home in Philadelphia, I think of the courageous deeds of those ministers - the more than 2000 preachers, priests and rabbis from all over the nation who met in Selma, Alabama, last week in a single bond of friendship. It is then that I realized that brotherhood is more than just a word.

We were walking across the bridge and the state police was there with these long billy clubs. I didn't feel any danger, but after I came back from Vietnam I was more threatened in Selma than I was in Vietnam fighting the Viet Cong. I mean they were fighting, a war was going on. I felt more afraid in Selma than I did in Vietnam. Prior to the urban rebellions in North Philly Georgie Woods had the distinct opportunity of being the first black entertainer to appear before



Waiting for a brighter day?



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA



The Night before.....The Morning after....The Night before



The Morning after....The Night before....The Morning After

the troops in Vietnam.

Urban Rebellion in North Philly

It was hot. Night fell in North Philly on this August night. The whole summer had been a riot. It was one year after the much discussed March on Washington. But it was still hot. In the streets of North Philly people were on the move. On the stage of the Uptown Theatre were B.B. King, Ben E. King and Garnett Mims. Even in the Uptown Theatre it was hot that night. Music, hot nights and rising consciousness creates a different psychological mood. It is August and too hot to do anything other than sit on the steps, walk around the block or ride through the streets of the city.

Young bloods watched occupational forces move through these simmering streets. They heard their parents and other relatives complain about the expensive and sometime substandard food in the neighborhood stores; the exorbitant rental fees they were forced to pay for poor housing. Constricted, condemned, convicted, many of the people looked for a way out of this highly circumscribed cluster of neighborhoods. A close review of the conditions that existed this hot August night help to illuminate the plight of many blacks at this specific moment in history. Was there a way out? How could they vent their anger, frustrations, disappointment and despair? What symbols of institutional power were within their reach? It was hot!

*70% of residential fires in Philadelphia in the early 1960's occurred in black neighborhoods, referred in official reports as "Negro slums."

*Nearly all of the 35,000 empty and abandoned houses in Philadelphia at the time were in black neighborhoods.

*Overcrowding is common with as many as seven persons occupying a single room.

So we can see that it was hot and stuffy. Crowded. Boxed in. Disputes between landlords (often absentee landlords) and tenants was at an all time high. Unemployment and structural underemployment greatly debilitated the community. Bars and more bars. Fenced in. Ready to bust loose. Moving toward weeland.

The Philadelphia Bulletin's article of August 29, 1964 read thus:

"Rioting broke out in North Central Philadelphia at 9:35 last night and continued past daybreak into the morning today.

Roving bands of Negroes, mostly young men and women and teenagers, smashed store windows along ten black business sections of Columbia and Ridge Avenue west of Broad Street.

Looters carried off armloads of clothing and groceries and struggled away with T.V. sets and refrigerators.

Six hundred helmeted policemen battled with clubs to end the disorders..."

The official reaction was swift. Mayor Tate passed 1850 ordinances,

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issued a proclamation calling upon all persons in the area bounded by Poplar Street and Lehigh Avenue and 10th and 33rd Streets to disperse to their homes or places of business. Failure to do so would be a misdemeanor punishable by up to two years imprisonment.

Despite the swift reaction, those in the streets theme song must have been "Keep On Pushing." Out of control. Moving through the streets of North Philly like a harmattan.

Negro leaders attempted to calm the mass crowd but to no avail. Police Commissioner Howard R. Leary decided to go to the Uptown Theatre and ask Georgie Woods to come out to talk with the people.

Woods: When we had the riots in '64, I had a show at the Uptown. I had to get out to the street, 'cause they kept calling me to go out and talk.

Q: Who asked you to go out there?

Woods: Howard R. Leary came. He was the police commissioner. That's how he got started. I know because I had Gladys Knight and the Pips, B.B. King, The Mad Lads and a few others. It was a real big show, and that's when the riots broke out. It was on a Friday night. Cecil was away in Atlantic City. So I was the only one here that could go out. He couldn't talk to the people the way I could. I left the theatre about 10:30 that night. We went to 16th and Columbia. That's where the riot started. Then we went from there to 23rd and Columbia. Then is started getting hot that night.

Q: What were they doing when you got out there?

Woods: They were rioting, breaking into stores and taking things. I told them the lady wasn't dead. I said I really don't blame y'all for what you're doing, but you have a lot of kids out here, and women out here. So I made them feel a little ashamed. I'd say now y'all can deal with these cops you big hard headed...I'd call them a few choice names, but why don't you let the kids and women go home? Why do you want them to get hurt up out here? Y'all stay here and do what you want. And believe it, they stopped. When I said y'all stay, they stopped. I went all over town for three days. And Cecil finally got here about three o'clock from Atlantic City. They had chased Goldie Watson off, they chased Rev. Jones. They ran all of them out. When Cecil got here we got together and we started riding all over. 'Cause everybody knew me in the streets. I used to walk and talk to the kids.

Q: Was it similar to when the epileptic was shot on Susquehanna Ave.?

Woods: That was in 1965. You're talking about when the guy got shot up on Susquehanna Ave. He had got shot. I had just got married. I was on my honeymoon when they called me to come back and stop the riots. That was over

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

some foolishness.

Q: How did that come about? What happened?

Woods: I don't know I wasn't here I was away on my honeymoon. They said come back and handle the riot. It didn't really develop into anything.

Q: It wasn't like the riot in '64?

Woods: No.

Q: When this thing finally subsided in '64 what time was it?

Woods: It stopped that Monday. 'Cause Friday, Saturday and Sunday were pretty rough. What happened was a lot of preachers got mad because they had a curfew, and couldn't go to church and collect no money on Sunday. "How we going to get a collection when people can't come to church." I ain't calling no names. That's what they were mad about. Me and Cecil had no sleep. We had been up all night for three days. Then we were down at KYW asking people to go home...My show was still going on because I told Bishop Jimmy to M.C. it for me. Then on Sunday at 3 o'clock in the afternoon it came over the wire that they were closing down the Uptown. We had been up. We were tired now. We hadn't had no sleep. We jumped in the car and said they ain't closing the Uptown down. We had 2,000 people inside and another 500 people outside trying to get inside. I got the sargeant on the phone. He said, "Yep we got orders to close it down." I said, "Wait a minute let me speak to your supervisor." He said, "Well that's my orders." I said, "You'd better get me the Commissioner." Then the Commissioner got on the phone. I said, "Howard, do you know what is going to happen. I got 2500 people in here, and another 500 trying to get in." I said, "Y'all haven't seen no riot down Chestnut Street. We're going to leave here and we're going downtown.

Q: So what did Howard say?

Woods: I said, "I don't want no cops within a block of this theatre because I won't have no trouble up here." I told him I don't want no cops. If you're going to have cops I want the Park Guards, 'cause they have a little more respect for them then they do the regular cops. And they took the city police away from there. They had the Park Guards at Broad and Susquehanna, at Broad and Dauphin, and right around the corner from the Uptown within a 12 block area. That's the only other cops that were there. So we were able to stay open, but the police didn't like it, because they weren't able to get people out of the street. So we went up there. Rizzo was there at 23rd and Glenwood.

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In Lenora Berson's Case, *Study of A Riot, The Philadelphia Story*, it is stated...

By early morning there was 800 police on the scene. Drawn guns, fire hoses, dogs and mounted officers had been proscribed by Police Commissioner Howard Leary in accordance with a plan he had developed after an eruption on Susquehanna Avenue in 1963. Commissioner Leary's aim was to keep physical violence and human casualties to a minimum, even if this tactic resulted in greater property damage. Pitched battles between police and roving mobs were to be avoided. Arrest of looters and rioters was to be the major instrument of control.

"Even so," Officer James McCade said, "It was like-being in a war. We couldn't do anything. There were so many rioters. Most of them women, teenagers, or even younger. The situation was completely out of hand. We'd chase one way, and another group would come at us from another direction throwing bricks, trash cans, anything."

The disorders continued unabated through the night of the 28th and the early morning hours of Saturday the 29th, notwithstanding the futile efforts of a succession of civic and civil-rights leaders to turn back the mobs.

For two hours Stanley Branche, militant leader of the Chester, Pa., Freedom Now Movement, stood on a box at the corner of 22nd Street and Columbia Avenue, pleading through a bull horn: "Please go home," He was scarcely heard above the jeers and boos.

Disc jockey Georgie Woods, Philadelphia NAACP vice-president, arrived in an automobile equipped with a microphone and loudspeaker and rode through the streets, begging, "Please get off the streets and into your houses. If you have problems, this is no way to solve them."

Judge Raymond Pace Alexander, a well-know Negro jurist, drove down with his wife from his home in the suburban-like Mount Airy section. Standing atop Georgie Wood's car, he promised a hostile audience of 300 on Ridge Avenue that if they went home, the police would leave.

Philadelphia NAACP President Cecil Moore, arriving about 3:435 A.M. found the crowds still at peak force. "I understand your problems," He shouted, "But this is no way to solve them. It's late. Everybody go home to bed." Moore, like the others before him, was hooted down. "Listen man," a woman with an armful of looted clothing yelled out to him, "This is the only time in my life I've got to get these things."

A short distance away, police were hustling two looters, a man and woman, into a police wagon. Someone in the crowd ran up to the police van and shouted, "See this, Cecil? See this? What are you going to do about this?"

The crowd surged around the police wagon, chanting "We want freedom." and deserting Moore who tried in vain to win them back.

At 4:00 A.M., a 23-year-old woman who worked as a secretary in the office of a local charity was arrested on Columbia Avenue west of 17th Street, 14 blocks from her home. Standing on an overturned refrigerator, she harangued

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

a crowd: We don't need Cecil Moore. We don't need civil rights. We can take care of ourselves." Minutes later, Police Officer Frank Eckman testified, the crowd surged onto Columbia Avenue "and started looting and plundering stores." The young secretary, later described at her trial by Visiting Judge David Weiss as "a lovely young woman," had no previous police record.

At 18th and Columbia, Negro Congressman Robert N.C. Nix stood sadly surveying the scene. "This is the most disgraceful thing I ever saw," he said.

Daybreak of Saturday, August 29, brought no surcease; roving bands of young Negroes marched in and out of the battered stores. At 6:00 A.M. one observer saw a group of marauders invade five stores. The police, it was reported, stood by and made no attempt to stop them.

"The hell with it," one weary officer said. "Let them do what they want."

By 9:00 A.M., exhausted by the long hours of rampage, the crowds began to thin. The looting became sporadic, and aside from the police complement, which had been doubled to 1,200, most of the people on the streets in the late morning and early afternoon were curiosity seekers and souvenir hunters.

At 11:00 A.M., a meeting of community leaders was called by the Municipal Commission on Human Relations. It was held at the Emanuel Baptist Church on 22nd Street. A decision was announced by Mrs. Sadie Alexander [Chair Commission on Human Relations] "to call upon the mayor...to enforce law and order and to inform him that 5,000 responsible Negro leaders were prepared to be deputized in an effort to support the police." The offer was never acted upon.

(Interestingly, Negro leaders called for stronger measures than the municipal administration deemed advisable. The Reverend Leon Sullivan, militant Baptist leader, even wanted the National Guard called in.)

At a noon press conference, Mayor James H. Tate invoked an 1850 state law to place a curfew on the 410-square-block area bounded on the south by Poplar Street, on the north by Lehigh Avenue, on the east by 10th Street, and on the west by 33rd Street. All bars and state liquor stores in the area were closed. Movie houses were dark. Anyone failing to heed an order to return home faced immediate arrest.

At about the same time, comedian Dick Gregory, who came to Philadelphia from an Atlantic City engagement, spoke to a crowd of 1,000 gathered at the intersection of Ridge and Columbia Avenues. Within half an hour it had dispersed.

During the daytime lull, word spread through the Negro areas of the city that "North Philly is an easy hustle" - which meant, in the parlance of the slums, that it was an easy place to make money, either legal or illegal, at this time.

As darkness approached on Saturday, the streets were once more taken over by looting mobs. Between 9:00 P.M. and 10:30 P.M. there were 16 assist-officer calls, and 1,800 embattled police fought a series of leapfrog wars. While hundreds of negroes lined Ridge and Columbia Avenues, reports of violence and brigandage came from virtually every street in the area.

Racing in and out of stores, nonpaying customers of all ages lifted

CAUSEMAN

merchandise from counters and shelves, trying items on for size and discarding misfits as they went along. One man held up a bag of groceries for the benefit of a television cameraman."

Berson continues, "Rioting and looting continued sporadically through Sunday afternoon, increasing in the evening and night hours but never again with the furious crescendo of the preceding two nights."

Post Mortem

By Monday morning the explosion was over. Except for the boarded-up store fronts, North Central Philadelphia was back to normal. But in the interim two people had been killed, 339 wounded (239 Negro residents and 100 police and other constables) and 308 arrested (108 of them from outside the riot area). Of those brought to trial, 200 were charged with burglary, 30 with breach of the peace and rioting, the rest with violation of the mayor's curfew. Property damage was estimated at 3,000,000.

The Aftermath

It was stil Hot Hot Hot! The urban uprising ended as did the month of August. Hot. Many reasons were given for this three day reflexive story.

*Negro Councilman Tom McIntosh: "Communists."

*Young woman on the Avenue: "Hoodlums."

*Federal authorities: "Aside from the actions of minor organizations or irresponsible individuals, there was no systematic planning or organization of any of the city riots."

*D.A. Crumbish: "Organized outside agitators."

*Construction worker at 17th and Montgomery Avenue: "First thing, you got too many bad cops."

*Mayor Tate: "Heavy concentration of taprooms, taverns and barrooms and similar establishments."

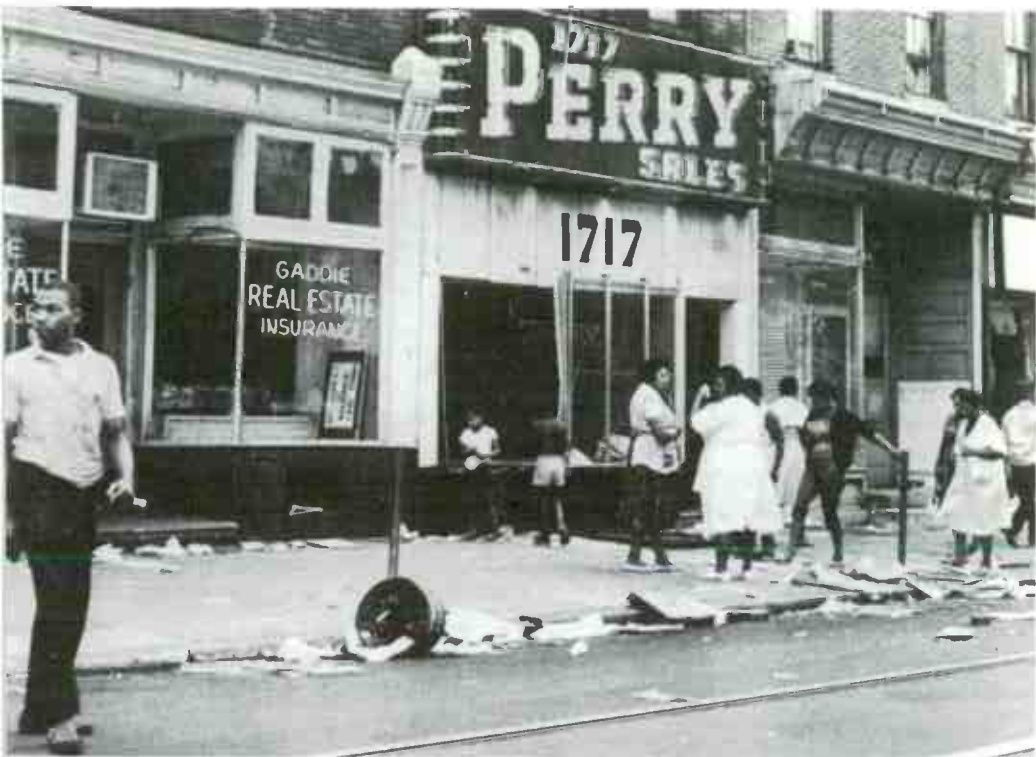
*Former official of the Commission on Human Relations: "Tie between police and criminals a prime cause for the break down of law and order."

*Atty. Cecil B. Moore: "A spontaneous thing. It was due to a long history of police mistreatment."

*Georgie Woods: "They blame Shaykh Muhammad for the riot."

Q: Why did they do that?

Woods: Shaykh Muhammad was one of those crazy people. Shaykh was wild. I mean super crazy. He didn't like King. He didn't like Malcolm. He didn't like Cecil. He didn't like nobody. He had a name he called himself. He was just a "radical". He would call the radio station and beat up Joe Rainey. (Host of the



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

The Aftermath



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA



**George arrested and shackled in 1963
while attempting to halt a beating of a young black man**

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

pioneer black talk show on WDAS- the Listening Post).

Q: You mean physically beat him up?

Woods: Beat him up. And we beat him up. I beat the shit out of Shaykh. Ask him he'll tell you. I had a cap pistol I used to use on stage. It looked like a real gun. And he put his hands up, and held them like that until the cops came. It was a blank pistol. We felt like guards at the station, 'cause we looked for Joe Rainey to knock him out. He was sitting behind the console. It was me and Mitch Thomas. Mitch is big and strong...Del Shields was in that studio, and somebody told us they're beating up Joe Rainey in the studio. We jumped out there, and I grabbed Shaykh and Mitch held him, and I was pounding on him with my fists. Ask him.

Q: Was Jim Clash there?

Woods: Yeah he was around, but he wasn't there that night.

Q: Was Ed Bradley there?

Woods: No, Ed wasn't there that night that we were fighting.

The newspaper headline read, "Radio Station Invaded, Joseph Rainey Beaten." The story follows. "Joseph Rainey, 62, former magistrate now a commentator for radio station WDAS...Was slugged in his station studio shortly after 1:00 A.M. today by a recent guest on his program. Under arrest as the assailant is Shaykh Muhammed, 32, whom Detective Edward Caffer described as the founder of a local Muslim Movement and operator of a Temple."

Shaykh had been a guest on Rainey's show two days before he housed him. According to Rainey, Muhammed, "Handed him a letter while the program was in progress..." The letter accused Rainey of having been discourteous and asked a public apology. A heated exchange between the two men lasted for about 15 minutes. Shaykh issued a statement, "You haven't heard the last of this." Rainey asked Muhammed to leave and Shaykh moved to the physical level. One newspaper account noted, "Rainey was knocked 20 feet and collapsed, stunned and dazed, beneath a desk; His secretary, Miss Pearl Williams...alerted two disc-jockey's, Georgie Woods and Mitch Thomas, who arrived as one of Muhammad's companions was walking toward Rainey. Woods grabbed the man, Muhammad's three other companions grabbed Woods and Thomas."

Memories.
Reconstruction.

Destinies.
Deconstruction.

Discoveries.
Reconstruction.



Leandre Jackson Photo



Reconstruction

The challenges of reconstructing Georgie Wood's past are multiconcentric. In order to more adequately illuminate his reconstructed past, it is necessary to include the testimonies of others. Those who speak offer varying degrees of insight into this complex black man. What we must realize is that what we hear daily as, "The Gorgie Woods Radio Show", is essentially a radio text heard across all the institutional, audible, solitary and mobile corners of urban existence. It engenders a large response.

Woods' Talk Show is completely interactive. He is as much effected by it as it is by him. This characteristic was evident in the period when Woods' emphasis was strictly on the music vibe. It must be remembered that Wood's exists in a profession with many rewards and an equal amount of occupational hazards. No matter how alluring the music/broadcasting industry may be, most reliable authorities characterize it as being a dangerous substratum of society. And within this specific substratum are a multitude of smiling worlds linked to other worlds. It might be described as a fast moving whirlwind of ever-changing worlds. Woods' career automatically brought him in contact with the widest possible range of characters.

The Rock World

In Harry Shapiro's book, *Waiting For the Man* (Quartet Books, London, England) considerable attention is devoted to a fairly commonplace occupational hazard in Georgie's profession. Shapiro states, "Disc jockey's, too, particularly in America, have long been a target for company favors. In the early days of rock n' roll, money, prostitutes and gifts were on offer in exchange for playing certain records. The scandal which broke in the early sixties over what became known as 'payola' has since been interpreted by rock historians as an orchestrated attempt to shove rock n' roll off the air. It certainly destroyed the career of pioneering DJ Allen Freed, who was indicted twice, in 1960 and 1964, and died shortly afterward, a broken humiliated man-while other non-rock DJs cashed in with impunity. With the increasing popularity of cocaine in the entertainment world, 'payola' gave way to 'drugola'.

Washington journalist Jack Anderson was the first to break the initial 'drugola' scandal in March, 1972. Record company employees came forward with tales of drug 'saloons' held by promotion staff, where cocaine, marijuana, and assorted pills were handed out to DJs, station managers and performers. Unknown artists took it upon themselves to supply drugs to DJs hoping to secure air play for records that otherwise would have sunk without track. The promotion man of a well known record company bought plays with \$20 lots of

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marijuana and then apparently complained that he was having trouble 'losing it' in his expense account.

Stanly Gurtikov, President of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), issued a trenchant statement calling for companies to sort themselves out for the overall goal of the industry...He went on to urge companies to conduct investigations and surveillances to rout out those dealing in payola/drugola among their employees and those working for companies as independent promoters and distributors."

According to Shapiro, "cash, women, holidays, threats of violence, but most usually cocaine" were used by promoters whose record company would advise, "Here's the record, get it on the air, but we don't want to know how you do it."

In the chapter title, "Copping", Shapiro opines, "Small drug-using cliques exist in all areas of the business including the record companies. A former employee of EMI remarks, 'We had this thing going in our department, just a few of us, and I was the person who knew how to get stuff.'" Elsewhere Shapiro traces the historical background. "Rightly speaking, one can say that the music business and the illicit market in drugs grew up together from their early beginnings. As minority activities in the jazz jaunts of New Orleans. Popular music is now the property of multinational corporations with many subsidiaries, thousands of employees and profits running into millions. It is impossible to place illicit drug trafficking on any commercial league table because dealers tend not to submit audited accounts. However, though, the intervention of organized crime (which also has a stake in the music industry) drug trafficking has world wide complexion involving the economies and political stability of whole countries, widespread corruption from the highest levels downwards and financial transactions on a breathtaking scale."

Finally, Shapiro argues, "Drugs are also a 'reward' in their own right: access to limitless quantities of illegal drugs is one of the rewards for being a rock hero- they symbolize success. If you can afford to be cavalier with expensive commodities, be it drugs or cars, you must be doing well... It reinforces the 'rebel' image and the notion that as a big star you can do what you like, whether it's line after line of cocaine, driving a Rolls Royce into a swimming pool or copulating with anything that moves."

In the excellent book, *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday*, Robert O'meally explains Holiday's encounter with drugs like this, "Her illness was not just drug addiction but her predicament as a supremely sensitive person who lived in a crassly indifferent world."

Living in a crassly indifferent world was not peculiar to Billie. Georgie, and many other blacks encountered the same. As to his own encounters with drugs, George says, "I was a delegate for Jesse Jackson [1984] and I saw the hypocrisy of the politicians. I wasn't involved in drugs too much at that time, but after that convention, I needed something to fall back on. They destroyed my faith in politics and everything else. So instead of going crazy, I started doing crack. If I hadn't done something, I probably would have gone crazy."

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

That was the period when I had to go see a psychiatrist. I went to a psychiatrist to get my life straightened out. I was totally wiped out from politics and deceit from politicians and people pretending to do for the black community. They really didn't want to do anything. They didn't care about the people. One of the reasons I was indulging in drugs was because I saw no hope for nothing and I was disgusted. So I just said to hell with it. It was available to me. Everywhere you went, people gave you drugs and dope and stuff like that. They'd put it on the table and you'd do a line of coke. You know it was just there. Record promoters would bring you coke to play some record and it was easy. It was very, very easy. And it made you forget about the problems that you had. Once the high was gone, you came right back to reality and the problem was still there. "

Q: What period was that 1984 to 1988?

G: It was late '70's, '80's up until '85, a long time. It was quite a while.

Q: What period did you go to see the psychiatrist?

G: That was around 1984 after I came back and tried to deal with that election and seeing all of the problems that we were having here in this stupid city that we live in. I don't mean stupid because of the people. The leaders are the ones who cause most of the problems for these people in this town. The leadership: greedy, egotistical leadership and that is what has destroyed the real fabric of the city. They shouldn't have been in the position they were in, in the the first place. They didn't give anything back to the city. All they did was take and grab and raise your taxes and take more money from the poor people that didn't have money...That was a period of my life when I was almost on the edge. I never got to the point where I had to have it, but to me it was escaping from the reality of the life that I was living. That is the best way I could describe the drug thing.

Q: Was it a certain time of day that you had to have it?

G: Anytime I could get it. Sometimes at night. I never got high on the air though. That's one thing I can say. I did get drunk on the air a couple of times, but I never got high because I just didn't do it at the station. I'd drink some vodka at the station, but I never got high. In fact the last time I was with Malcolm, I was drinking and he said I should stop drinking. And we got into a big argument about my drinking because I did drink a lot. He told me, "That stuff is going to kill you." And you know, two weeks later, I ran into a pole. Malcolm told me about it. I wouldn't listen to him. He said, "leave that stuff alone. It's no good for you." I didn't listen. People can tell you things, but you have to go for yourself. Nobody can tell me that it's cold outside. I'm sitting inside and it don't look cold outside. I'd have to go out there and get cold, then

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I'll realize. So I didn't take his advice but he was the kind of guy that tried to put you on the right track because he had already been down that road.

Q: Did the drinking lead into the drugs?

G: No. I'd been drinking since I was 14 years old. I've been in bars on 143rd Street up the street from where my brother lives. On the corner there is where I had my first drink in a bar with some guys who wanted to see if I could drink with them. I went in there, took a drink and it almost killed me. But drinking didn't lead into drugs. What led to the drugs was like I said, despair. I was making good money. I had a good job, but my concern was not so much about me, it was about trying to do something for the city, and the people and the country. That was my concern... not so much me. I could have gone on and made all the money in the world and been very happy but it wouldn't have been any good to have a whole lot of money. What would be on your marker when you die? What could you feel about yourself? You could make the money but then if you don't help people it's really no good. What good is it if you just want to spend it on cars and extravagant living? You are supposed to help people when you are fortunate enough to do that. I know what it is to be hungry. I know what it is to go without a meal. I know what it is not to have a place to live. This is all a part of me. So when you get in a position to help, you should try to help.

Q: Did visiting the psychiatrist help you to come out of the chaos?

G: That was basically to get my mind straight.

Q: What did they do?

G: They put you on a couch. You lay on the couch and it was almost like hypnosis. Things that I couldn't deal with before, after talking to him I was able to deal with a little bit better. It was a learning experience. It was always something that I wanted to do.

Discoveries. Origins. Memories. Destinies. Memories and more memories. Should one use a deconstruction or reconstruction approach. Moving to dissolution. Georgie was still at the other track station when the mandate came from management to reduce staff.

Q: Were you asked to take a cut in salary toward the end of your tenure at the previous station?

G. No, they never did. They didn't ask me to do anything the handwriting was on the wall when...two days before Thanksgiving, they fired all these people. I said wait a minute, I got to take another look at these people. I got to look at them again, because you don't do that. You give them some kind of notice. You

just don't say you're out. People have families that they have to take care of. That's the kind of mentality that these people on these radio stations have about Black people. They got these stations through affirmative action. They were supposed to bring Black people into the broadcast industry. They have failed. They didn't do that. They went for themselves. They didn't bring nobody in. They didn't train anybody to be a manager, to be an owner. They didn't do that. All they did was go to the Bank themselves and go to Africa, and take African vacations, and Bermuda vacations, and buy mansions and stuff, at the expense of Black people who were suffering. And that's what I feel is wrong with Black radio stations owners. Most of the ones that I've known, leave a lot to be desired. They're not in love with the people that they serve. I'll put it to you like that.

Coke Attack

S. Is this around the time you had the heart attack?

G. No, that was no heart attack. That was a cocaine attack. That's what it was.

S. Okay. Did it happen the same year?

G. Oh no. My drug abuse and drug use, began when I realized that I'm dealing with these snakes, and I had to do something to take the pressure that they kept you under. And the only way that I could get relief was to do dope. And they're the ones that drove me to do dope. I didn't want to do it. But some of these assholes I had to deal with to survive, I had to do dope just to get high, to forget what they were doing to me. And that's what caused me to do it. I ain't proud of it. I mean I'm not gonna brag about it. It happened. Man will do right and he'll do wrong. I was wrong.

S. During the period when you were doing it, were you still on the air?

G. I didn't get high on the air. But I did coke. It was just a thing, you'd walk into a person's office, they'd have a line and you'd do it. And it was just a thing that I did, and I'm ashamed of it, but hey a man's gonna do what a man's gonna do. Now I'm only a man too, like everybody else.

S. When you went to the hospital, did the staff recognize that it was drug induced?

G. When I went to the hospital, I got these pains in my chest. And I kept getting these pains for two or three days. Meanwhile I'm still getting high. So I said well I better get to the hospital. And it got to the point where I went to the hospital,

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and right away they said, "you're having a heart attack." They put me on this thing, and put that cardiograph thing on me. They started giving me oxygen and all that stuff, and the doctor said, "you had a heart attack and it could have been fatal. Were you doing drugs." I said yeah. He said well you can't do that no more. That's what caused it. I never had no needles or that old crack stuff, but I did cocaine. And I'm not proud of it. But I'm just like anybody else, and I'm not the only one. A whole bunch of people out here have been involved with it. They just don't have the courage or the nerve to admit it. Well, I can admit mine, and I have no problems saying that I've done it. But I hope kids don't do it because it can be very dangerous to young people. For me it was fortunate because I did it at a later age in my life. But if I had been young and got strung out on dope, I couldn't have done anything. I could not have survived.

S. How did you manage to stop it?

G. Well, I realized that it was gonna destroy me. And either I was gonna stop or I was gonna be pushing up daisies. You don't need to have no rehabilitation center. I think that's a lot of bullshit. We have centers where they're supposed to stop you from using drugs. You stop yourself if you really want to stop. I had support. You see people would also talk to me. Without support from your people, I don't think you can do it. You got to have total support, because you do things that's bazaar. You do things that's strange when you're on drugs, and they'll support you, and try to get you straightened out.

S. How about your listening audience?

G. They don't even know. They're gonna be shocked when they read this in the book, that I was a doper. Nobody knows this.

S. When they came to the hospital, they didn't...?

G. No, it wasn't that. They thought it was just a heart attack. Nobody in this city, outside of the inner circle, would know that I was doing drugs. They don't know, or they didn't know. They'll know now when they read the book.

S. Now before you had been drinking before that time, right?

G. I was a drinker. I drank all the time. They knew I was a drinker. I drank vodka, and gin, and scotch, or anything I could get my hands on. I'd drink on the air.

S. You'd drink on the air?

G. I used to go to work, have me a bottle of vodka over here, stack of records here, and a pistol over there.

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S. What was the pistol for?

G. Because they threatened us at the radio station. Everybody had a gun at the radio station. And I stayed drunk all the time. I'd be on the air drunk. Malcolm said to me, "you're gonna kill yourself if you don't stop drinking." I said, "Man come on and have a drink." He knocked the glass out of my hand and broke it. At the radio station. Too much to drink that I had an accident, ran into a pole and almost killed myself. Did Ed Bradley tell you how drunk I was that night?

S. He mentioned it.

G. Did he tell you how drunk I was when I left the station? I left the station at 100 miles an hour.

S. He said he and Del [Shields] came behind you.

G. Yeah, they couldn't catch me. I was running up the road and I just kept going until I ran into a pole.

S. What were you driving? What kind of car?

G. A Cadillac, and tore it up. Totaled it. Right into a pole. I didn't run into nobody else which is lucky. I blacked out.

S. Do you recall Moms Mabley coming to the hospital?

G. Yeah. The nurse came in and...Moms came to see me at the hospital, and I was coming out of it, you know I was getting out of...

S. Do you recall the nurse coming up when Moms came?

G. Yeah, because she said, "George your mother's here." I said lord I know I'm dead now, because my mother has been dead for 20 years...since I was a kid. So I said, "oh Lord I'm in Heaven." And it was Moms Mabley who came to the hospital.

S. And she came right to the room?

G. Yeah. She talked. In those days entertainers were different than what they are today. They were more concerned. Today entertainers are into another world. They're not like they were then.

S. So the nurse came to you and told you that your mom was there?

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G. She said your mom is here, your mother is here. And I thought it was my real mother. I said I know I'm dead, cause I'm in Heaven. And it was Moms Mabley. She came all the way from New York to see me. So that was that era. But with all those things that I've done that was bad or anti-social, they weren't that bad. It was only bad for me. Cause I didn't rob nobody, or I didn't stick up nobody, or steal from nobody, but it wasn't a good example and I'm glad that the younger people at that time didn't know what I was doing, because they may have followed me. That's the good part about that. They didn't know I was doing it.

S. Is it a relief talking about it?

G. It's a very big relief. Because you go through life with all this shit on your mind, that you've done. It's like confession. It's like getting it out, you know, and people got to know that I did the same thing that many of them have tried or are doing. But it's not right, they have to know that. And sooner or later you got to make peace with yourself, and you make it. All I'm doing is making peace right now, and getting it out.

One of the persons who has been with Georgie all during the reconstruction period was Dave Richardson.

State Representative David P. Richardson

Q. Can you recall when you first encountered Georgie?

A. Probably at Girard College, back in the early '60's, I was about 14 or 15 years of age, and I was just proud to get involved with the so called Civil Rights struggle. At that time there was Cecil B. Moore, and I later became very involved with the NAACP. It was more Georgie than Cecil at that time because Cecil was out front. So we acted as soldiers. Georgie was always the person that like, sort of like, kept us going. I was always down at the Uptown, and I would go to the shows. I would stand in a line that was all the way around the corner. So I used to sit at home and listen to people on the radio. And then we got involved in the struggle. We were very serious about the struggle. We were involved in the demonstrations in 1964, when they brought Malcolm and Dr. King to this town. A lot of people don't remember that. There was a big struggle around that because Cecil did not want Martin Luther King to come to town.

Q. Do you know why?

A. Well, because he didn't get no respect at first. Everybody said that he wasn't getting the kind of play that he was supposed to get as a leader in this town. So the ministers got together, they had a meeting and they worked it out, and they

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

allowed him to come to town, and Cecil and them were alright. The rest of it is history. The one thing about Georgie is that he's been very consistent all of his life, and I don't think that he has ever been given the kind of national credit for the countless things that he has done, including being involved in the Vietnam situation, including having the election stolen from him in 1967, including all the other individuals who never really saw him as a serious entity...

Q. Why didn't they see him as a serious entity?

A. Well, I think that for whatever reason, folks here in Philadelphia believe you have to go national before you get recognized fully. It's just the mood of Philadelphia. I mean you'll be amazed. Even a guy like Frankie Beverly. They used to walk through the streets harmonizing, and everybody was all hyped up, but he had to go to California to make it. And I feel the same thing happened to a guy like Georgie Woods. He had to go outside of the city in order to make it. Sister Sledge is the same way. Other groups that came out of Philadelphia, had to leave Philly. So Georgie deserves this book. Georgie deserves the kind of credit that has never been given to him in a national way, even with his potato chips, they would not take him seriously. If this was a white potato chip...

Q. Why do you think that?

A. Because, "Georgie Woods, the guy with the goods:" you know disc jockey, DJ, my man. People took him for granted. So therefore we don't see him as a serious entity. We talking about economics, if this was a white man on this potato chip, you'd be seeing billions of dollars of potato chips sold. So we have to recognize and understand that we got to do it ourselves. This book will bring some awareness...Not only will it show a light side but also the sincere side. Georgie Woods is probably the one person, more than anybody else, who can give a sense of direction, give you a feeling of hope, give an understanding like nobody has ever had before. I think this book will be a fitting honor to our city, the kind of book that has never been expressed in this kind of detailed way. Chronologically, historically, from a historical perspective. It outlines the life of a man who is truly a man.

Next

Joey Temple (If it wasn't for Cody and George I wouldn't be into radio).

Q. When did you first meet Georgie?

A. 13 years ago, WHAT, I mean WDAS.

RECONSTRUCTION

Q. How did you meet him initially?

A. M.O.V.E., you know M.O.V.E. They was getting ready to mess his car up.

Q. So what did you do?

A. I told them to get the fuck off his car!

Q. That was the beginning of it, right?

Q: What do you understand about George?

A. That he's a human being. That's he's a man. It was like a lot of the times the media would call him a racist. And here's a man that would go to bat for a white man if he needed.

Q. What makes you say you wouldn't be in radio if it wasn't for Cody and George?

A. Cause I was an ex-gang member.

Q. What gang was that?

A. Tenderloin. I always fought my mother about the Tenderloin. Then like George taught me and Cody gave me an opportunity.

Q. Was Georgie open to rap music when you met him?

A. I tell you this much. What a lot of people don't realize is that it was, on Georgie's show where for the first time, "The Message" was played in the City of Philadelphia. That was the first rap record that had a strong street social message. You know I like Something Inside So Strong. When they say the louder you refuse to hear my voice the louder I will sing, I sense something inside so strong, and you may hide behind the walls of Jericho, but your walls will come tumbling down. The further you run I will always be there. It's something inside so strong. And that record is like a symbol because people have done Georgie wrong, and when he's playing it, you can relate. You don't even have to open your mouth. Just say, well something inside so strong.

Mrs. Crenshaw, Traveling Agency, Proprietor.

Q. What was your first encounter with Georgie Woods?

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A. Oh, with George, my goodness that has been a long time, when I first came here.

Q. How long ago was that?

A. No, I'm here 26 years.

Q. Do remember the first time you met him?

A. Yes, it was a party. I was with Air Jamaica. We were trying to put a party together and I contacted him. He's just been a terrific help. I left Air Jamaica, I opened Crenshaw Travel.

Then I run into some zoning problems, and Councilman David Cohen and the city and George came to my zoning hearing. He was a tremendous help to me. Of course he gave us a lot of publicity on the air. And then I formed the Caribbean Business Association.

Q. What year was that?

A. Last year, 1991. And he helped me to get it off the ground.

Q. How did he help you get it off the ground?

A. Well, for one, I had to get some publicity about it. He put me on to all the proper contacts, and gave me a lot of radio publicity.

Q. Have you ever had an occasion to book him to Jamaica?

A. Yeah, I did a trip for them this year. The "Woods Bahamas Escape," when he went down with those people and raised hell in the Bahamas.

Q. Were you the person who convinced him to do that?

A. Yeah.

Q. How did you convince him to do that?

A. Well, he was tired.

Q. How did you know he was tired?

A. Because I'd go him at the radio and talk to him every now and then and he tells me that he wants to get away. So I say, "well look I'll put the trip together for you and you can get away and have fun." And he did. The passengers that

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went with him said that he was so much fun on the trip.

Q: Why do you see a need for a book on Georgie Woods?

A. Because he has been such an influential person in the community as a Black person. He's one of those guys who'll get up there and speak out about helping the Black community to get off their feet and going in the forefront of helping them to achieve their goals. And I think because he is such an unbiased person, you know he is not one sided, I think he is more genuine.

Q. Has Georgie done anything to help bring the Caribbean and African American communities together?

A. Yes he has. I have heard people call in on the radio talking about Jamaicans. And he really tell them! He'd give them hell. He'd say, "although we come from Jamaica, Jamaicans are good people and we are all Black, we all come out of Africa. We may have different cultures but we are all Black.

-David Williams:

Q. How often do you get together to play cards?

A. Every Sunday. At my apartment, at Charlie Brown's home, and sometimes at Georgie's house.

Q. What do you play?

A. Pinocle. He don't mind getting his head rubbed.

Q. Almost every week?

A. For the last nine years.

Q. Is that right, every Sunday. What time do you start?

A. About 5 o'clock in the evening.

Q. How long do you play?

A. 2 in the morning.

Q. How many in the game?

A. Just 4. Four guys.

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Q. And the same 4 the whole while?

A. The whole while.

Q. Who are the other three?

A. Bill, Charlie Brown, and myself.

Q. Okay, and your name is?

A. They call me Dave "the Wave". Last name is Williams.

Q. How'd you first get the first card game going?

A. The first card game. Probably playing poker. Down at the radio station, playing poker. Found he liked to play pinoche too. So we started playing every Sunday. We're playing tomorrow. He don't miss none. He loves cards.

Q. How does he take it when you beat him?

A. He takes it alright. He takes it modestly. He don't get upset. He owe you money, but he don't pay. He says, "oh, I'll pay you next week."

George Reconstructs: Staying Power

Q: How did you prepare for a career in the broadcast industry?

A: I'd listen to myself. I'd get a newspaper and practice reading it. I'd get a commercial and practice reading it. Like he's doing now practicing. Practicing, practicing, day in and day out. Whenever I got a chance to practice I did that.

Q: Is that the reason you feel that you've lasted this long in this business?

A: I don't know, I guess the reason I lasted this long is not because I'm just good at it. I'm alright. I don't consider myself great. I think it's a measure of respect from the people over the years that I've been able to cultivate. That has kept me around longer than anything else because there are certainly people with a better voice than mine who have come and gone, and I'm still here. So it has to be something other than my ability. It's the respect that they have.

Q: And that respect is not something that people can buy, it's earned?

A: Right.

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Q: When you were doing all those things for people who were burned out of their houses and stuff like that, why did you give so much away?

A: Because people needed it and I had it. It's that simple.

Q: Most of the times you didn't do it through organizations you did it yourself?

A: Yeah, cause organizations have a little resentment. People needed something and you have to just try to help them. Just do it. It's one of them things. It's part of life.

On Fundraising and Leadership

Q: When you raised \$27,000 dollars at that church in North Philly...

A: Cause Cecil didn't want me to give nobody none. Cecil wanted all of the money for himself. he didn't want nobody to get none. I said everybody gets some of this money it's a charity. He said, "you're going to crawl to me and bring it to me." Abernathy said you don't have to crawl to me I'll take it right now. It was all over the papers. It was all over the press. Pick up the old Bulletins you'll see it.

Q: Did Cecil ever show up at that meeting?

A: Yeah, he finally came and got the 10 thousand dollars we had for him.

Q: He got it from the station or from you?

A: The station didn't have it. This was not the station's money. It was a charity.

Q: Wasn't it called WDAS Charities?

A: No after I came back from Vietnam it was the Freedom Show. When I came back from Vietnam (I was away for 17 days), they wanted it to be WDAS Charities because this would give them control over what was happening, and I didn't want that.

Q: In the beginning they had proposed that right?

A: No, we had been doing these Freedom shows. They were called the "Freedom Shows", but they wanted it to be WDAS Charities. That's one of the reasons I left the station because of that.

Q: That was the way you were supposed to go out? You were supposed to forget

about the thing right?

A: Yeah, it was not easy trying to keep your dignity.

Q: How did you keep your dignity in all of this?

A: You had to stand up to it. Whenever there was something wrong you had to face it. Correct it. If you had to kick butt you did that too, but you couldn't let nobody just...Cecil was the only one who was able to somewhat get away with these kind of things, but no person that I worked for would...

Q: You mean Cecil got away with more stuff with you than anybody else did?

A: Yeah because he was the kind of guy that would stand up to injustices. I respected that. If he was a wimp I wouldn't have spoken to him.

Q: So you don't respect nobody who's a wimp?

A: I didn't care. I didn't care about nothing. I was wild and young. "Young and the restless" they called me. But Cecil, he was good. I liked Cecil. He was arrogant.

Q: Do you think it was important for a black man to be a little arrogant in that time period?

A: Yeah you had to be a little arrogant, because if you weren't arrogant they'd think they could do anything.

Q: How about the Fellowship Commission? Were you associated with Marjorie and Penny and that group?

A: I didn't mess with them. They were the kind of people that used black folks to make big bucks off of them. All the liberals did that. What do you think they were doing? Do you think they loved us? They were hustling us. That's all they were doing. Like the conservatives in another vain. They didn't want us to live next door to them either. So they weren't no different from the people in the south, except they could smile at you.

Q: Weren't they helpful in bringing King in?

A: No, they weren't no help at all. It was me and Sam Evans. Sam Evans and myself were the ones who brought Martin Luther King to this town. We might have got some donations from her for some of the things we were doing. Handling, no. They wanted to be involved because they didn't even want us to associate with King at the beginning. That was a no-no. They didn't want me

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to associate with Cecil. They said not to associate with the Muslims here. They're going to get us in trouble. Stay away from Malcolm and all that bullshit. Don't bother with Malcolm he's going to get you in trouble.

Q: What did you say to them?

A: I'd say I'm already in trouble. "Stay away from Cecil. He's a loudmouth. You can't gain nothing with him. He's going to destroy your reputation." That's what they said. Lawyers told me that too. I was his vice-president (NAACP).

Q: What role did George Sellers play (General of the NAACP's Direct Action Committee)?

A: He was Cecil's back up man. He was right there. Wherever Cecil was you'd see George.

Q: He was like an enforcer more or less?

A: Yeah. What happened with Cecil...I think he was naive too. He was alright being a man, but he was naive to people using him. I resented the way people used him. They had agendas that didn't fit into what we were talking about. All they wanted was some kind of recognition so they could get a job somewhere. We weren't worried about that. They didn't care about Cecil. As soon as he got in trouble they all dumped him. They all left him when he got in trouble. Behind his back they would talk about him. Say things about him, "oh he's so arrogant." I didn't like that. So that's why I kind of stuck with Cecil, cause I saw how they used him and they would butter him up to get something. Then when they would get it they would leave.

Q: So even though you had North Phila. United you maintained membership in the NAACP?

A: That was just an organization specifically for North Phila, because there was still so much of a need there. But there again when you involve yourself with politics and social clubs and groups and organizations you have a problem because the politicians have a different agenda than what yours may be. You should never involve yourself cause politics are politics.

Q: When Sammy Davis came in to have this show to raise money for the gangs what was your tie to that?

A: Well we wanted to do something for the gang kids, cause they all listened to me on the radio. They were fighting and killing each other.

Q: How did you get Sammy Davis?

A: I asked him. I had met him a couple of times, and we asked him, and he agreed to do this for the kids. He had been accused, because he was involved with all these white folks, of being anti-black and all of that. So he wanted to show that he could give something back to the kids, and that's why he decided to do that. He's a businessman, but he gave a hell of a show for those kids. He gave them \$30,000 dollars, and they started fighting over it.

Q: The gangs started fighting over the money? Did you give up on raising money?

A: No, it was just a small group, it wasn't the whole thing. Because that happened that doesn't mean everybody was going to do that.

A Goode Report

Q: You actually took time off to campaign for Charles Bowser?

A: I thought it was the thing to do because I honestly believed that if he had won we would have had a different kind of first black mayor than we had.

Q: Different than Wilson Goode? In what respect?

A: I just think it would have been different. It would have been better than what we had with Wilson. I would have liked Charlie Bowser to be the first black mayor. That's why I took off. I wanted Charlie Bowser to be the first one, even though there was a time Charlie Bowser and I, had our differences. When he was deputy mayor under Tate I didn't agree with some of the policies, but I felt he would have been good. He knew how that office works and he would have been there. I did it because I thought he would have been better than the rest.

Q: What's your biggest disappointment with Goode?

A: There's so many I couldn't even begin. I would have to write another book on that. I'm totally disappointed with Wilson Goode.

Q: Why? You're the person who kept going on the air saying we have to protect our first black mayor.

A: I'm saying he was a big let down. A big disappointment for those of us who had high hopes for the first black person who became mayor of this town. He didn't leave a legacy for nobody. My son could come here and do a better job than he did as mayor of this town. He didn't leave nothing for nobody to build on. Whoever comes after me they have a legacy. They have to work to outdo

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what I did. He didn't do that. I think he was afraid of certain groups of people in this city. Whites specifically. I think he was totally afraid of them. He didn't stand up to them like a man should. When whites were trying to get a couple out here in Bartraum to move out he should have moved in there and said, "if it's not good enough for them then I'll move in I'm the mayor." He's a real big disappointment. I don't want to talk about Wilson Goode. I respect him to some degree. He had a chance. He's the one who had an opportunity to do something for all of these little kids running up and down the street to feel good about blackness. That was his job. That was his duty. That was his obligation. That was his responsibility. And he didn't do it. He didn't give these kids nothing to fall back on. That was wrong. Not for him or for me, but he owed it to them, and he didn't do it.

Q: Do you feel that he used your radio talk show in a special kind of way?

A: Wilson Goode, nobody knew him before we put him on the air. We put him on the air a whole year promoting him to be mayor of this city. Once a week we put Wilson Goode on the air for a whole year. Before he became candidate for mayor. I was the first one who suggested to Wilson Goode that he ought to run for mayor, when he was the managing director. He said I don't want to be mayor of this town. He could have been honest with me and said he wanted to be mayor. I said we're going to get the petitions anyway. I got the petitions and took them to the radio station. I said we're going to sign these petitions and everybody else fell right in line behind that. Here's how it happened. "Budweiser Superfest" was having this show at the Spectrum. I was down there trying to get the stadium, asking him as managing director if we could get the stadium to do the superfest down there. That's when I said, "you ought to be mayor." He never got us the stadium. He was managing director then. That was a long time ago. After he got into the thing, we got people to sign the petitions and register and vote and all of that. Had people selling chitterling dinners, and collard greens and cabbage to get him a 10 dollar bill here and there. He didn't live up to what we wanted him to be as far as I'm concerned. A lot of people may not agree but to me he was a big disappointment. Maybe to others they loved him. I don't hate him, but I don't think he did his job. Neither do I think the mayor in NY is doing what he ought to be doing. I don't know that much, but going with what my people tell me over there. You gotta be something other than just a figure head. I would hope that the first black mayor of my home town N.Y. would not leave the kind of legacy for young people looking at his record a legacy of do-nothing, don't carism, a legacy of arrogance, a legacy of being the first mayor to drop a bomb on a black neighborhood. We hope it will not happen in any city, but especially in New York.

Q: Do you find that many of these black mayors sometimes censor by figuring they can't say or do certain things and nobody even tells them that they can't do it.

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A: There's nothing you can't do. You can do anything you want to do if you have enough balls. If you ain't got the balls then you ain't going to do nothing. We've been programmed to feel that way about our ourselves. If you're a black man, who looks at the press, the media, you don't see anything good. Pick up the newspaper today and see what you see in there good about a black man. You might see a woman doing something, but you won't see anything good about a black man. That's because we're a direct threat to whatever's out there in the mind's of whites...although we're not really a threat, because we're still a minority. There are more of them than there is of us. We're not a threat but they perceive that about us. They have us where we hate our own kids. The media. Where we're afraid. If we see a young boy walking down the street we are afraid. This is what they've told us about our own kids. And it's sad what they do to the black man. They'll destroy you and you don't know they're doing it. So I think leadership, as far as black people being mayors, can't do too much.

Helping to Elect A Mayor

I know the story on Wilson Goode more than anybody else in this town. I think I know him better. To me he was a fraud. He was a fraud because he mislead black people to believe in him. They saw a sign of hope. He gave us all that feeling when he was elected. But the day he was elected was the day I found out that he was a fraud. The very first day. I had gone too far with it and I couldn't turn back. I wanted to retreat from him, to get away from him, but I couldn't do that because I had gone too far. And I found out he was the biggest phony. I've met a lot of people that have been worthless. But there were signs that you could tell...I'm a people person and I always give a man the benefit of the doubt. The first day this man was elected when he got the primary, I found out that he was a worthless individual. The pain I had to suffer with him I couldn't tell the people about it. I couldn't let them know about him, because they believed in him, and I couldn't destroy their hope in that man. I had to live that for eight fucking years. Excuse my expression. And it pained me everytime not to be able to say to the people y'all made a terrible mistake and I did too. I could never tell them. And I had to let it ride itself out like it did. But I found out the first day. I had been promoting Wilson Goode for over a year, each and every day, each week, each Wednesday he would come on my program. Every Wednesday morning he'd be there before I got there. He'd have coffee and doughnuts and everything. One week he'd buy and another week I'd buy. Every week for one solid year. Letting people get to know this man. Listening to him so they would be familiar with him.

I was trying to get the "Budweiser Superfest" down here at the stadium. He was managing director, he could make any decision on that, and I had gone to him because he had the power to make the decision. But he never gave it to me. I was in his office on the Saturday morning he had to decide to be mayor and

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I thought he would be a good guy for mayor. So I said why don't you run for mayor. I had him on the air with me. Promoting Wilson Goode. Even changed the call letters GOODE radio, WDAS. Every half hour this went on the air 'Goode radio WDAS'. I got the petition drive going for him. I started the petition drive then everybody got on the bandwagon. Then they all wanted a black mayor. They all jumped on the bandwagon. He said, 'oh I don't want to be mayor, I'm happy here,' you know all that kind of stuff. So we got the drive and we had long lines of people around the radio station to register the people to vote, because we could do it at a black station. I mean long lines, til the sun go down people were lined up out there to register so they could vote. Finally he won the primary after we worked with him and campaigned with him. I'd go in the street and shake hands. I honestly believe that Wilson Goode was jealous of the popularity that I had with people. I really believe that. Because we'd be speaking at a senior citizens home or something and he didn't want me to speak. The people up front would say, 'we want to hear from George.' He'd say, 'we'll let you hear from him in a minute. 'We want to hear from George.' They'd go to the point to where he couldn't speak until I spoke. And I think he resented that.

So finally he'd say, 'well here's George. Here he is now he'll speak to you.' Stuff like that. I'm campaigning for him, not for me. Everybody knows me. So we're down at the hotel on primary night. But that Monday before the election it rained. And I was all over the city, from out here in Bartram Village all the way to Northeast Philly that day. All over the city. It rained and I got wet. I didn't work that day. It was raining and I was wet and we went up to the naval supply depot. I'll never forget it. We're up in Northeast Philly, and it's all white. I don't know the exact address. There were many whites there, and this was the day before election. He said, 'I think y'all better stay in the car cause if they see too many black people they may not want to vote for us. You know how they feel about us. Now this man was running for mayor. I said good it's raining I don't want to get wet no more anyway. I'm tired and wet and soggy. So I stayed in the car. The next night was Tuesday night, election night. I'm down at the hotel, I've been with him all of these years, I met him when he was up in Harrisburg at the P.U.C. So I walked around, and everybody with the campaign knew me, cause I introduced him to this damn town. They didn't know nothing about no Wilson Goode, basically. He had lived here, but didn't have any reputation with the folk. So I went down to the hotel, about 8 P.M. or 9 P.M. and the polls are closing and the returns are starting to come in. So I went into the room where he was. I wasn't supposed to go in, but I walked on in, I pushed the security guys aside. A guy got pissed and said you can't go in there. I said, who's going to stop me, you? I said do you know who I am? Bill Green came up behind me I said, "Bill why don't you tell him I'm the baddest nigger in this town. Tell him." I pushed him aside and went into Wilson Goode's room. And Wilson Goode was in there and some preacher was in there and he was laying on the bed with the mix match socks on. That's how dumb he was. The returns started coming in. The white boys out here would get the returns and they would study it and then after they decided what was happening they would pass it on

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to Wilson. I said who the hell is running for mayor? I said why are you doing this isn't he the candidate? I said why would you take the returns and not let him see them first. "Well we want to analyze..." I said, "well he's not stupid, he can analyze what's happening with his returns as they come in." 'Oh that's okay, that's okay.' Then he just looked at me like I wasn't supposed to be in the room he said. He gave me a little funny look like what the hell are you doing in here. This is on election night. The returns kept coming in and Wilson Goode kept building up steam, steam, steam, building up to the point where it was obvious he was going to win. He wasn't at the Civic Center...this is the truth...I lie on no man 'cause I haven't seen a man that I didn't like yet. Bill Gray went on the stage at the Civic Center...If I'm lying God take the breath from inside of me and I speak no more. Somebody came in and told Bill Green, the Mayor then, Bill Gray is on the stage making a nationwide speech about Wilson Goode's election. Mayor Bill Green turned red as a tomato like this top. He said, 'oh my God that son of a bitch is getting national exposure at your expense.' These were his exact words. Wilson Goode jumped straight up out the bed, 'What? I told them not to make no speech until I got there.' I am not lying. Bill Gray got finished speaking. John White Jr. took the microphone, he said, 'oh I got to get out there.'

His mother was sitting on the side near the suite. She wasn't even in the room with him. He ran so fast to get to the Civic Center he left everybody, everybody including his mother. Me and Terry Lee Barrett, and you can verify this, were leaving. I said Mrs. Goode aren't you going to see your son make his acceptance speech. She said, 'oh yeah he's going to take me.' I said well he left. I said if you want I can give you a ride I'm going out there. They agreed that he had left. She gets in my car, I put her in the back seat, I drove her to the Civic Center. I got out there and the President of the City Council Joe Coleman and his wife were leaving. He's the President of the City Council, they couldn't get in the inauguration of the next mayor of the City of Philadelphia. This is the truth. I said, Mr. Coleman how are you doing? Aren't you happy everything is fine, cause we was dancing in the street. He said, 'I can't get in there. I stopped the car and said excuse me you can't get in where? Does the city own this building here? They won't let you in. I said please get in the car I'll get you in. I went back to the back door of the Civic Center with Mr. Coleman and his wife, and Mrs. Goode his mother. I said to the cop you mean to tell me the President of the City Council can not come in here when a new mayor, our first mayor has just been elected won the primary, will be the next mayor of this town, and he can't come in here for the acceptance speech. I said well you might be looking for a new job next week cause he is the president of the city council, I'll make sure. He said, 'oh no it's nothing like that.' You know how they do. And I said Mrs. Goode the mayor's mother you don't want her in there either? I said cause you can be out there with the squirrels in the park next week, patrolling out there. He got us in. We went in, she went somewhere in the civic center. This was election night now. I remember it because all of the big whigs from the Democratic party were up there shaking the man's hand. So I said I'll go up

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there. I'm not going to stand on the line with them. They're nothing but politicians and I'm the one who helped put him there. So I went up on the stage to shake this man's hand and congratulate him, and he says, 'You get off this stage'. On national t.v., on election night he told me this. So the people out there were calling for Georgie Woods you know, the place was packed, but they wanted me to speak and say something, and Wilson Goode couldn't handle that. 'You', he pointed his finger at me, 'get off the stage'. God take the breath from me if I'm lying. So I said that ain't no problem. This is history. The man has to be *excited*, I could understand that because I'm used to crowds and all that. So I go downstairs to the press room, to get a statement for the broadcast for the next morning. I was on the air in the morning then. I went down, me and my producer, we walked into this room that they had set up for the press. I walked in and said, congratulations, I couldn't get to you up on the stage. I understand you didn't want no crowd on the stage. (I made an excuse for him). His response to me was *'I'm not talking to the press tonight.'* That's what the man told me. In the press room. Terry Lee Barrett was there. He said, 'I will have a press conference later with all the press people, but right now I'm not talking to any press people.' I said no problem, I'll go talk to your wife and your daughter and your son, so I took my microphone and interviewed them. Less than two (2) minutes later the boys from channel 6 and channel 10 came in. The man, 'oh yes I did it I won'. He grabbed it all. Man he was talking then he looked and saw me he said, 'I'll talk to you I'll be on your show tomorrow.' He was scheduled to be on there on Wednesday anyhow. Back at the hotel Marion Barry, the mayor of Washington, D.C.,....the mayor of Middletown, Pennsylvania where they had that explosion, Johnstown. There were three black mayors in the State of Pennsylvania. They could not get in to shake this man's hand. We say in the lobby and talked. The mayor of Washington, D.C., couldn't get in, I said to Marion, I didn't know him, and that's when I told Marion he had a problem, cause I had been hearing from the record industry that he had a dope problem, and I said to him, I don't know. There's some F.B.I. investigation or looking at something in your character. I said watch yourself or something like that. I said I hope you don't think that Wilson Goode is indicative of the people of this city. We are not like that here. There are a lot of good people here. And I'm here to tell you I don't approve of the way you were standing here by him....And I stayed there all night to reassure Marion Barry that Philadelphia people were not like Wilson Goode. I had to do that cause I felt it was my duty. He's the Mayor of Washington D.C. man. The next day I left the hotel at 6 o'clock and went to work. And Wilson Goode got there about 6:30. I was on the air with him, and I asked him....I really had to ask him about, 'you get off the stage'. I said what was that all about? I asked him on the air.

Q: What did he say?

G: Security broke down I couldn't control the crowd. He had an answer. My sister in New York, my cousin in Fayetteville North Carolina, a friend of mine

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from Los Angeles saw the whole thing. They said what is the matter with you and the mayor. That's when I found out right there and then that we had made a terrible mistake. He had made some commitments. We had a black car dealer in Lansdowne. He had a Chrysler dealership. So he said, well George if you can get the city to buy some cars from me I can become a big guy in the auto industry. Cause he was buying a lot of cars from dealerships. So I said Wilson this is a black guy that's trying to make it, and I've been helping him on the air talking about his dealership on the air. 'Oh that's no problem all he has to do is be certified as a legitimate minority and he got it'. The man goes and gets certified. The day he got certified, Wilson Goode goes and buys a new automobile from a white Oldsmobile dealer. To say to you 'fuck you'.

Merv Caruth joins in the conversation.

Merv: We had a black tie affair celebrating the independence of Trinidad and Tobago. We invited Wilson Goode. He was supposed to be there at 9:30. That man came to that affair around 1:30-2 o'clock that morning with about 17 body guards. It would not have been so bad if some were black, they were white. They were walking and would knock everybody out of the way. Got on the guest table and they stopped everything for him. Everything they offered him, he didn't want it. Got up and spoke for 5 minutes and left. And everytime I see him in white surroundings he's smiling. But any time he's around black folk he's angry. I sat next to his wife, and that woman was just staring directly in space. And up until this moment that man hasn't turned around and said how are you doing are you enjoying yourself.

G: Yeah but during the inauguration I think they sent a ticket, one ticket to me. And it was way up in the back. Kenny gave him an office, a building to work out of, donated all kinds of money to this man's campaign and didn't get a ticket to the inauguration at the Academy of Music. If I'm lying you can ask Kenny Gamble. I asked him he said, 'I didn't get any tickets'. No tickets. You know these are things you do for people that helped out in a campaign. Any smart politician would make sure these things were taken care of. That's one of the low points of me being on the radio, because I couldn't reveal the identity of this man to the people that I brought him to. I brought him into the homes of the people that listened to me. Cause he couldn't have ever gotten there. I took him in every home and every person that listened to me on that radio. They were familiar with him because I would bring him on that radio every week. Once a week for a whole solid year. And he just kicked us in the behind. Look at before he got there, and look at Philadelphia now after Wilson Goode and you see how much he did for these same people who sold chicken dinners and chitterlings to get him elected. All that we got from Wilson Goode is the memory of OSAGE AVENUE.

George continues to express his concern for the institution and

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values that have sustained black people over the years. Institutions like the church have been transformed in the six decades of his existence. In his own case, such an institution as the pool room, served as an important factor shaping his own life.

Much of his public life stage/music/broadcasting career was linked with traditional and nontraditional political entities. Whether discussing elected officials or musical giants. Woods is candid.

The Changing Black Church

G: The church used to be very different, you could get comfort there. They used to be able to soothe whatever problems that you had. You could always talk to your preacher and get some kind of guidance. You would feel better. It may not have done much, but at least you could...you felt that there was something out there that you could put your fingers on. Now the preachers are doing the same things as the dope dealers almost. They're hustling just like everybody else. They're trying to get a buck.

Q: Other than Zion Baptist were you a member of other churches?

G: No that's the only church I ever belonged to.

Q: Why is that? What about when you were in your twenties?

G: When I was in my twenties I didn't go to no church. I went to the crap games. I went to the pool rooms. That was my church. The pool room was my church. I took you there. That's where I hung out, morning, noon and night. Or the corner bar, wherever that was. That's where I hung out. Whatever I learned I learned it there. In the poolroom and the corner bar.

Q: Were there older people in the pool room who you talked to?

G: They were all older than me I was a kid. I was 15 or 16 years old hanging around men 40. I learned from them.

Q: What did you learn from them?

G: About life. How to survive. How to do things. Things I didn't know how to do they taught me. I didn't have a father to teach me. My father died when I was 9 years old. The pool room was my school, my university. The University of shooting pool.

Q: Were you surprised to see that pool room standing when you went back



George speaks with Barbara Bush and Ms. Shirley Dennis



Courtesy George Woods Collection

George meeting with President Carter in Georgia



Courtesy George Woods Collection

George and Gilda Woods with President Carter, Rosalyn Carter and President Ford at the White House,

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

there?

G: Yeah, it shocked the hell out of me. Well that was just one. There were a number of pool rooms we used to go to. I was disappointed to go back to the old neighborhood and see it gone. It wasn't there the way my childhood, whatever little bit of childhood...really I was never a child I was always a man. I didn't have a chance to grow up and be a child. To do things that young kids do. To go swimming, to go on hikes, crap like that I never did. Because I had to go get a job when I was 14 years old. So I missed all of that childhood. But what little childhood I had I thought I could get back to it. When I went there everything was blanked out. It's behind me, but it's there. You look back over your life and ask what would have been if? What would have been if I had a chance to go to school and learn like these kids have today to be educated, to know how to make things and do things, just to create things I didn't have that chance. So what I learned came from the streets and that's all I am a street person anyway. I'm not what you call a scholarly person, I'm just a street person.

Q: Have you any desire to go back to Barnett, GA?

G: Well it's not a town it's a farm. It only had one store there, and I'm sure the house...it was a shack it wasn't a house, it wasn't built with bricks and stones it was built out of wood. So after all these years the house has to be gone. I don't want to go back there. It brings back too many bad memories. I went to Plains, Georgia with Jimmy Carter and it brought back some memories.

Q: What did it bring back?

G: When I was younger in the South when the white man called, you didn't walk, you ran to see what he wanted. The secret service said Gov. Carter wanted to speak to me. So they said, "come on he's waiting for you." And I said, "I got run out of here before and I don't plan to get run out of Georgia again. He'll wait until I get ready to talk to him." He was running for president. Ask Clarence Avant. He was sitting with me. I said no way am I going to run now. He can wait now. I made him wait.

Jimmy Carter

Q: What was your impression of Carter once you got a chance to talk to him?

G: I was in awe because I had never spoken to any president before, presidential candidate or anything like that. What happened, we just talked in general about small talk. It was nothing about the conditions of people, how people live or anything like that. Now if I were to talk to some president or presidential candidate it would not be about the little small things that we talked about.

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When I went to the WHite House we just talked in general. Nothing specific. I didn't leave him with nothing. I didn't say anything to him, and I kind of thought that was a waste, because not too many people get a chance to talk to a president. When you speak to one you ought to have something to say. And I didn't say anything to him.

Q: You chose not too?

G: Well it was trying to maintain some form of communication with people you always try to walk softly. Plus I was inexperienced then too. I didn't have as much experience as I do now.

Q: How did Clarence get there?

G: Clarence and Don King were different kind of people...what do you call it a wheeler and dealer, he could make deals. He was a deal maker. And he could specifically say to someone what it is he was looking for. Don King was the same way. When he gave all that money to Jimmy Carter to be President he could afford to say to Jimmy Carter this is what I want. He gave him big money. If you don't give up some big money to these people you'll have no real input with them. That's politics. He who pays the piper, calls the tune.

Q: So Phil Walden was also involved?

G: Well, that was Jimmy Carter's manager so to speak. He got all the entertainers, but he was also very much involved with Carter. He was like his unofficial campaign manager. He set the stage for where Jimmy Carter went.

Q: So when you arrived in Plains, you would have been in contact with Phil first?

G: Yeah Phil set it up. That's how I got there, because of Phil Walden. He knew my importance here, and if I would say a kind word here it would mean something for Carter here so he wanted us two to be together. I think Carter was very accessible. I wanted him to do some things in the black community that he didn't do. Like once a week go to a broadcast on one of the black stations across America for the Black community. He did a broadcast but it was to the general public, and we lost the blacks. That was what I proposed to them. They were very responsive, they were very accessible. You could call the white house and get them. You can't do that now.

Q: Was that the only time you were able to get through like that?

G: Yeah.

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Q: Would you handle it a little differently today if you were brought in by a candidate?

G: Oh shit. It would be a whole different ball game. I could run the whole thing down to them. I was an entertainer, and that's all I was about entertaining. I wasn't about issues per se, although I knew there was problems, but when you're an entertainer you try to be an entertainer not a civil rights activist. Because you can carry it too far. That's what I can say about Micheal Jordan he's a ball player and that's what he does. He don't get into the politics, and it's probably a big mistake for me to get involved with it because it costs a lot of time, a lot of money. It took away from my job, and it caused me to have a lot of unfavorable people who I would not have been on the wrong side with so to speak. Once you start taking a position with politics somebody over here is going to be mad, somebody over here is going to be glad. So if you can find that middle ground just play that...this is my advice to young people getting into it. Now you gotta be in the middle ground. Once you start taking positions and stands you are going to make somebody mad. And somebody is going to be out to get you.

Q: Was that was the case with you following the Post '67 period?

G: Not really, I never gave up on politics because I knew that that was the only solution really. What I did give up on is my belief in people. I gave up on the people. People are so stupid to elect people year after year who produce nothing for them. To me that's stupid. That's asinine. That's what I gave up on is trying to...I was trying to just make people aware that they had power. See the vote is the most powerful thing you have, it is bigger than the gun. But if you don't use it right it's like having a water pistol. And most times with blacks I think they got a water pistol instead of a vote. Cause they don't use it right. I don't know if we should be married to the Democratic party. I don't want to be with none of them. I'd rather not be with any of them and make them all come after me. This is the position black people have to take if they're going to gain anything in this society. Leave the democrats alone, leave the republicans alone and be the swing voters that you ought to be and let them come and offer something for the vote that we're going to give them. Now the democrats take us for granted, they can get up there and propel a Jesse Jackson and think we're all going to vote for whoever he ...That's bullshit. Jesse's only one vote. He don't control nothing.

Reconstruction. Putting things in perspective. Bringing the pieces together.

Cody Anderson is the CEO of WHAT Radio Station.

G: This is the gentleman who is writing the book and we want a comment from you in the book, if you feel up to it. We didn't say anything bad about you, but

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we might.

Q: Do you recall the first day you met him? What was it like?

C: I didn't like George when I first met him.

G: You still don't like me.

C: When I first came to Philadelphia from Chicago, before I came to work at the station, I used to hear this guy talk about running Volkswagon's over. He used to make comments like if I see a Volkswagon I'm going to run it off the road. And I was driving a Volkswagon. So I used to say I hope I see this guy talking about he'll run me off the road, I'll kick his butt. He used to annoy me. I used to hear him talk about women saying pull your girdles up, and all that stuff in the morning, and I used to wonder how this guy got away with saying all this stuff on the radio. Then when I first came to meet him at the station he didn't speak to me. He didn't talk to me at all. but I was used to that 'cause I was an outsider, and nobody was really friendly to me. This is a cliquish town.

Q: People at OIC were cool right?

C: Yes, I worked at OIC before I came here. I'm talking about when I came to DAS. So one day, I used to work with the General Manager who was white, and none of them knew what I did, so he and I almost got into it one day 'cause I was in Bob Klein's office and he and Jimmy Bishop were sitting in there. And Bob Klein and I were talking about how to handle a check that the SCLC had given them that they knew was going to bounce. So before he came in the office Bob Klein, and I were talking about how we were going to handle it. When he was in the office, Bob was explaining something to me, and I said, but I thought we were going to handle it another way. And this guy said, hey man don't ask no questions just do it. And I looked at him, I didn't say nothing, and then I said something else and he said it again. I said, hey man I don't talk to you like that. Don't disrespect me like that. And we had a couple of words, I got pissed, and I walked out and slammed the damn door, and it shook. And I got in my car and i drove away, and when I got to the police barracks I made a U-turn and I came back. I said there ain't no reason for me to be running away from no shit. I went back over to that office, and when I went over to that office I told that guy Bob Klein. Bob Klein said Georgie don't know why you did that, what's your problem with him, and I said listen I had a bad day, it was not personal, but I don't talk to George like that. They moved out of his office and were in the conference room, so I walked out of there and said I'm going to go down there and apologize to the guy. I'll never forget Bob Klein's words were, 'don't apologize too much', cause he liked the fact that I stood up to George, cause most people didn't. Now this was our next encounter. Then another thing happened, being naive, I got into betting football, baseball and basketball

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games. I won playing football, because I used to play basketball and baseball that would be easier. Man I got into a jackpot and lost so much money it scared me. It was a lot of money to me at the time. About \$2500 dollars. It scared the devil out of me, cause all I could think about was...these were mafia guys that I owed this money to. So I walked around, I didn't know who to go to. I didn't want to go to my in-laws as a last resort. I went to several people who were supposed to be friends of mine and they all danced me. I was walking down the hall one day, and I looked like the world had come to an end. And this guy was sitting in his office. Now mind you he and I almost got into it not too long ago. I walked past his door and he said, hey man what's the matter? He was sitting in there messing with these coins in his hand, and I said, nothing, I don't want to talk about it. He said, what's the matter man, come on in here.

Q: Did he know something was wrong?

C: Anybody that looked at me knew something was wrong. So I told him what had happened. He said come on take a ride with me. We got in his car. It was after three o'clock; the banks were closed. This man called Continental bank and told them, "I'm coming over open the back door, I'm coming in." This was after the bank was closed. Continental Bank, a white branch over here at 63rd and Haverford. I rode over with him and they opened the back door of that bank. We walked into that bank and he told them, give this man \$2500 dollars he has a problem Then the man said, well we have to go through a credit check and the whole bit we don't think he can do it. He says give him \$2500 dollars. I don't care if you have to take it from me or my account or cover it with my account. I walked out of that bank with a check for \$2500 dollars. I was impressed with that. And nobody ever reached out and extended a hand to me like he did. That's why I take all his shit. That's why I take it right now, because he extended himself to me when he didn't have to and I always remembered it and I paid for it dearly over the years.

G: Then good, pay some more.

C: But that is what sticks out in my mind with him. But I'm not the only one he's extended himself to. He's not modest, he wants the adulation, but he doesn't carry himself like that, but he deserves it. Because there are a lot of guys like me, like this brother Merv, that if the truth be told, would come forth and have the same kind of stories.

Q: As a manager you've had the opportunity to work with a lot of different personalities. What would you say, distinguishes George?

C: George has spanned the generation gap, because George makes adjustments as he goes along. When it's not apropos for him to play music anymore, when that pattern and trend was changing and the other jocks were moving to the FM

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and playing music he started doing talk. He did it well and that revived his life. He fought it, he didn't want to do it, but he did it and he did it well. So he then became a household word to a different generation. He had established himself for his charitable work and his dj work for a long period of time, 10 or 20 years, he put another 10 years on his career when he made the adjustment to talk. I haven't seen many people do that. And the people in Philadelphia have a special kind of relationship with George, I've found.

Q: Did you have that kind of thing with E. Rodney Jones or Sid McCoy in Chicago?

C: I'm from Chicago, and nobody has had that kind of rapport and admiration and I've travelled all over.

Q: What makes the difference?

C: The thing that makes the difference is George. Just like he will do now without thinking: he'll go to somebody's house and have dinner or he'll go to an average person and make them feel special. Other people don't do that. They love him for that. They spoil the shit out of him. I've said it. I've said it on the radio, and I've said it to him. Now when I was at DAS what made me decide to leave is that the owner called me up and asked me to make some cuts during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays of '88. He called me up, and it was the first time he had ever interfered with my running the station. He wanted me to layoff some 20 people. And he also wanted me to lay George off. He wanted me to let George go and Butterball. I could not do that to George.

Q: Why?

C: First of all, because if I had done it I would have had a reaction from the community that I couldn't deal with....I wouldn't have wanted to deal with.

Q: Why did you feel that way?

C: I knew it because I pay attention. I know how the people felt about him. I mean I'm out in the street too. I talk to normal, everyday people too. I saw the works that he did. Now George is crazy, but he didn't deserve that. Had the man said to me at the time let him keep his salary, but I'd like for you to move him into public relations, I think it's time to do that. I may not have felt as bad about doing that. But to let him go after all of those years that he had put into that radio station I wasn't going to do that. That's what changed my relationship with that owner. He didn't like me doing that.

Q: Was he aware of Georgie's importance to the community?

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C: He didn't care, he's cold. A cold blooded guy. I was going to have to stay here and deal with that. So after I wouldn't do that he said to me, well cut his pay back. I said I'm not going to do that. The man just had a heart attack that will kill him. I'm not doing that. And he got pissed at me. He started asking me after that to file all kinds of paper reports, all kinds of stuff I never had to do before, to get back at me. And it was shortly after that that I left.

Q: What year did you leave?

C: The following year in September '89.

Q: What year did you start the station here?

C: September 6th, 1989. I started working on acquiring the station...he did this bit in October or November 1988, by January or February 1989, I had an agreement to buy this station. I started working on it right away. I knew I had to get away from him.

Q: Did you then think you would bring George over here? What was that process like?

C: I was a little pissed at George when I left.

Q: What was the reason for that?

C: Because George was a part of a group. George Woods, Carl Helm and Wayne Joel, that started a union.

Q: Why were you against that?

C: I wasn't against the starting of a union. I was against the way they did it; they snuck behind my back and did it.

Q: You were management.

C: I did not have a management relationship with them.

Q: You saw them as friends.

C: Yeah, because I gave them everything, I did everything for them. They probably did it because they thought I was leaving, but they should have come to me because I had that kind of relationship. And they snuck me, and the way I found out about it was right before the Christmas holiday of '88. Kathy, my secretary came to me and gave me a letter. This is the first time I knew about it. The letter stated that they were starting a union, and indicated who the three

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persons were who initiated it.

Q: Did you call them in the office?

C: Yeah, together.

Q: What did they tell you?

C: I told them I didn't like or respect what they did, that I took it personal, and that as long as they were here I just expected them to do there job. I really didn't like it, and I thought that we had a different kind of relationship than that, but since it was done it's done. I moved away from it. And I had a real cold relationship with a lot of people after that. Because it's like somebody's doing something behind your back and everybody knew it but you. I made up my mind to leave then. I didn't want to manage them anymore.

Q: Did you plan to bring Georgie with you at that time period?

C: In my mind I had. When I decided to go talk, that's when I decided to do it.

Q: The reason for that was what?

C: Because of the name recognition value, and because of my familiarity with him, and the fact that I still thought he had some good years left in him.

Q: What's been your key to managing people that are so well known?

C: To me I am the manager of the station. I am not their father, I don't have all the answers. I treat them like they're grown adults, and I expect that they treat me like that in return. We can disagree, they can go back and forth with me as any adult would do, and when it reaches a point where they can't convince me and I can't convince them, If I'm the manager I have the final word. But they are adults. I am not their father. I'm only their manager. I don't care if they holler at me. I don't care if we disagree. I don't disrespect them, I don't accept them disrespecting me. I think that's the bottom line.

Q: You would say that Bob Klein was the person that trained you in broadcasting

C: He gave me the opportunity to come in.

Q: Were you a quick learner?

C: I don't know if you would call it quickly or not. I started off there as a

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salesman in 1972. I probably became assistant GM in '75 or '76.

Q: That's quick in this business.

C: It's not really quick. You would have to know what the scenario was. Bob Klein needed somebody to do community stuff.

Q: Who was doing it when you came in?

C: Nobody. He had a person named Lebaron Taylor [currently a senior vice president with Sony, Inc.], who was assistant general manager. Actually I got there through him. His wife, and I, and my wife all went to school together. So we got together one day and had dinner. He asked me why don't you come by and apply for the job. And I did. That's how I got in. I had quit my job at the bank, and I was supposed to report to work that Monday. When I got there that Monday he told me, 'oh, there's only one other person that we have to see to approve your employment'. I said man you told me I had the job, I quit my job. He said well there's just one other person that we have to see and that other person happened to be Bob Klein. I had already met Bob Klein. I was a basketball player, and I used to play for the Philadelphia Athletic Club. And I used to go down there, and before practice would start all of these old white guys would be up there playing. And this guy used to choose me cause he wanted to win. And he would choose me, and I would just get the ball and give it to him, and we won until our practice started. So I walked in the door, and Lebaron didn't know this, when I walked into the door, and I saw this last guy, and I never knew what he did, he just befriended me in a racist environment he latched on to me. I was the only black person around playing with all white people. It was a prejudiced club, but he latched on to me. I never knew what he did, we never talked beyond basketball, he liked winning. And when Lebaron Taylor took me in, and he saw that white guy get up and come over and embrace me. He told Lebaron he could leave. The man gave me 50 dollars a week more than Lebaron had promised me.

Q: Was there a difference working for an all black administration and an all white administration? What was the major difference?

C: Yeah there was a difference. Working with all blacks you could devise programs and do things without necessarily explaining or considering how it might affect another community.

Q: Explain what you mean by that?

C: They were Jewish owned. So you could do programs for the black community, but you had to be very careful how you did them in relationship to other communities. But when it became black owned I could do whatever I

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wanted to. Especially when I became in charge. And it's not that I'm a prejudiced or an insensitive person, but I didn't have to think about it.

Q: I'm talking about at WDAS?

C: That's what I meant. I meant there. I became the general manager when it became black owned in 1979. They bought it out of New York, two black guys.

Q: What were the circumstances that led up to that?

C: They were forced to sell, it was a distress sale. That's how a lot of black people got into the business.

Q: Maybe you can tell us what a distress sale is?

C: A distress sale is where a radio station that is running the risk of losing its license can cut a deal with a minority to acquire the station at less than fair market value. And they can get out of it, and get that money out of it. That's what it was. So they were being investigated by the FCC for plugola.

Q: Distinguish between plugola and payola?

C: Payola is where you take money for playing a record. Plugola is where you're doing an affair and you put on extra spots to plug your affair. They had Borges at the time, Borges was this big company, and because the members of Borges was George, Bishop and Bob Klein. That's how they got the name, that was Borges. It was a compilation of their initials. Bob, George and Bishop somewhere in there. So what had happened was when they would give shows, and I found this out later, if the show wasn't working well they'd go do what they had to do to make it work. So they would give themselves extra spots. So that's what the complaints were. That they were giving themselves unfair advantage, because they were giving themselves more spots than other promoters had.

G: Actually what happened...these reports were not valid. They were envious because all of our shows were successful. We never had any failures. We were succeeding, and the others claimed unfair competition, because we were on the air, and we were able to get the acts, and they didn't have access to a microphone. So we didn't do anything that was illegal. We just looked out for our own selves.

C: What happened was that...it was interesting, because it was my real first experience with the manipulation of the media. Because what happened was they were being investigated, and this reporter Brian Ross from NBC, came down from Nashville and...remember those crews were camped out around the station for a while, and Bob Klein wouldn't talk to them. So one day, being a

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black spokesperson and naive, he said to me why don't you interview with this guy. He's only going to ask you a few questions. He said he'll go over the questions before he asks them. So I sat in the office at DAS, and he said here are some of the question I'm going to ask you. He says, 'I'm going to ask you is it true that DAS is being investigated for payola?'. I said no, no, no, no, wait a minute. We're not being investigated for payola, we're being investigated for plugola, there's a difference. And he said, 'okay'. And he went on and asked me 3 or 4 other questions that were irrelevant. So he said, 'are you ready'. I said yeah. So we walked over to the engineering department, cause that's where he wanted to film. This guy had his cameraman there, and he was standing next to me. I wanted to kick his ass. What he did was this, he put this microphone on me, and he fixed his and his cameraman...had the camera in my face just like this. And I'm standing there, I'm cool, and the first question out of the guys mouth was what do you think about the payola investigation that they have lodged against DAS. He caught my expression, cause I had just told his dumb ass that they weren't investigating us for payola. So when he asked me that he caught my reaction which was [facial expression], and that's all he showed. That night on T.V. that's all they showed him asking that question and my expression. Which showed guilt.

Q: How did people respond to it? People in the industry?

C: Nobody knew me at the time. It was no big deal. I didn't get any repercussions. I was more pissed at him. I learned of the manipulative capabilities of the media. That guy did that to me. And I also watched him, and I saw how the process happened, Bob Klein used to pull his car in and the cameras would be out in the parking lot, and he wouldn't talk to them, and they would follow him, and they would be trying to ask him questions and he wouldn't say nothing. And he used to wear a hat, and he had his hat broke down, and they just showed him with his hat down like he was the mafia. All they showed was his picture. I watched how they did that thing. They projected him as the mafia type, and they tried to show guilt, like we had done something.

Q: How did you extricate yourself from that? What happened?

C: Well what happened was that they sold it shortly after that. See I wasn't involved.

Q: You were a manager right?

C: No, I was not a manager for all practical purposes, but Bob Klein's assistant...Bob Klein was the general manager, and Bob Klein's father-in-law, Max Leon was the president. The president had an office downstairs, Bob Klein had an office upstairs, so when you say was I a manager I was the manager in name but I was restricted to the amount of authority I had. So what I did, instead

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of trying to boss and manage people I started creating community programs. I started doing more stuff there. Cause everybody could go around me to Bob Klein.

Q: So you weren't the direct link between...?

C: I was supposed to be. I was supposed to be, but they could all go around me to Bob Klein.

Q: You seem to be the only assistant manager that was black other than John Bandy. As I recall that was a position that Bandy held before.

C: And Lebaron Taylor. Kae Williams was at one time too.

G: I don't remember that.

C: I thought Kae Williams told me that at one time he was.

Q: Was your role the same that John Bandy played?

C: I don't know what John Bandy's role was. I gotta believe no, because John Bandy was the type of individual that probably wanted to manage people more than I did. I started focusing on community programs and voter registration and stuff like that. I wasn't knocking myself in the head trying to manage people, because all of these people had been there longer than me. A lot of them resented me and the relationship I had with Bob Klein. But I wasn't going to put myself in the position to try and manage people. After I moved closer and closer I made them respect me, because a couple of them tried to indicate that they didn't have to deal with me. A couple of the white ones. So I would take them into Bob Klein's office and make him tell them that they did. I just chose not to deal with it.

Q: How did the rating war between you and WUSL impact you personally?

C: We were number 1 in the city. We became number 1 in the city for the first time in history.

Q: What year was that?

C: About '85. We were #1 in the city.

Q: For what period of time?

C: For 1 book. That's a book. We were periodically second, third, fourth or fifth. This particular year we came in #1 in the city. I think it was '85. What happened

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as a result is right after that POWER 99 came into existence. WCAU FM turned black and pulled Perry Johnson. They pulled Perry Johnson just as I was becoming the general manager. Shortly after that, that was '79, in about '83 we became the number 1 in the city. After that POWER 99 came into existence and they started taking more money out of the station.

Q: What do you mean?

C: They bought two stations in St. Louis, KETZ and WZEN, they bought into Cable in Queens. They bought into Cellular in Detroit, they bought WWRL in New York, all from proceeds from that radio station.

Q: What station?

C: DAS. We were making money, they just took it all out and didn't put anything back. In some instances they reinvested money in other properties, in other instances they just pulled the money out for themselves. We didn't have money to compete. POWER 99 was giving away automobiles, and we were giving away record albums. These guys were taking everything and wouldn't put anything back, and we couldn't compete.

Q: Did you find that the jobbers, the record promoters, did they relate differently to you when POWER 99 came on the scene?

C: No, it was not necessarily a different relationship, because we were still highly respected, because we were still a powerful force to deal with. They just started splitting their time. They'd spend time with them and they'd spend time with us. The record people suffered drastically when Jimmy Bishop left as program director. Because Jimmy Bishop used to fight for the black promoters. Jimmy Bishop and George. They would tell promoters you can't come in here and see us without your local person. And all the local people were black. When Butterball became PD after Bishop left, of course Butterball started relating differently to the white people, and he didn't provide that security and reinforcement for the black promotion people and subsequently they started getting rid of them, one by one. I'll never forget them getting rid of Armon McKissick who had been with CBS for years. He was a black promoter. They got rid of him and used a white boy named Herb Gordon to cover both DAS and the white stations. And other companies started doing that. To this day there may be only...there are no local black promotion people, they are regional, somebody out of Baltimore or Washington who covers this market.

Q: So the demise of this group is directly related to the music director at the station?

C: Jimmy Bishop and Georgie Woods. When they were in control, and they

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were in control.

Q: During what period were they in control?

C: Up until Jimmy Bishop left. I don't know when Bishop got crazy and left. I don't remember the year. But as long as Bishop was there and was PD, he and George were the people. The record people would come and see them and try to get their own individual things with them, and they wouldn't see anybody from out of town, they wouldn't see any white promotion people, unless they had their black local promotion person with them. And those local people were Buddy D, Jack Welger, Harold Burnside, Armon McKissick, Billy Hendricks. All of those young black brothers had gigs. There were a lot of them.

Q: So what you've seen in less than 10 years is a total change in the makeup?

C: White people started putting less...

Q: I've read the journals and they don't write about it that way.

C: Well who controls the journals. They started putting less money in black radio, and started putting more money in cross-over radio. They started taking us for granted. We'd break the record, and they end up playing it over here on the white stations with the cross-over play, and that's where they started putting their advertising dollars. It used to be that you could get anywhere from 200 to 300 thousand dollars a year in revenues from record companies advertising their products. After that period of time they don't spend 50 thousand dollars with black stations. They don't spend 50 thousand dollars with DAS. I bet you today. And if they spend 50 thousand dollars it's a lot. And if they spend it they only spend it on special occasions, and they give no credit to the jock who cut the spot.

Q: Outside of that nothing comes into the station right?

C: You have to try to come up with promotional things. Come up with promotions.

Q: Is that why there is a strong emphasis on promotions?

C: There is a strong emphasis on promotions because we have to get the product played. And relationships is what gets your product really played. Once it's aired you have to get in there and work it. Play my record, play my record. That was before DAS became like POWER 99. See the owners of DAS wanted DAS to be like POWER 99. But they didn't want to give you the money to work with like POWER 99. So they animated their music, so that now everything is computerized.



Georgie Woods remains an advisor to the young

Leandre Jackson Photo





Leandre Jackson Photo

Jus' Chillin at West Philly High with the Young Ones, 1992

World Radio History

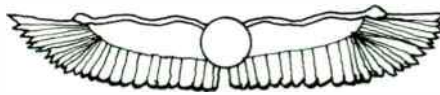
Relaying

Politicians, artists, business people, the high rollers, athletes, legal people and everyday people. Mixing and making it. Symbiotic relationships.

In order to hear a fuller life story it is absolutely necessary to talk to people who know Georgie Woods.

What follows are the narratives shared by those who knew him at various stages of his life. These interviews are essential in illuminating the many worlds Georgie affected and those that affected him.

Nuances. Narratives and narrators. Watch them pan the mic.
Memories. Encounters. Memories.





Courtesy George Woods Collection



Butterball

(Program Director of WDAS)

Q: Describe the good and bad days with George?

Butterball: Let me tell you something, I don't have many bad days with George. I happen to be a big fan of his. In fact before I ever got in radio I grew up listening to him. I was a kid in Philadelphia that used to listen to him do the old request program, ring the bell for this one or that one. I loved Georgie Woods and Jock-O, and people like that long before I ever met them. I worked with George for many years. What he meant to the civil rights movement here in the city. And to the people here with the rock 'n roll shows.

Q: Did you go to any of the rock 'n roll shows he had?

B: Sure.

Q: Which ones do you recall most from the early days?

B: Yeah I'm talking 50's cause I got to the station in the early 60's. I can't remember exactly cause I used to go to the Brooklyn Fox in New York. Every weekend I would go to see shows. Here in Philadelphia when they ran like 10 times a year, or I would go up to New York to the Brooklyn Fox or to the Apollo, there was another one up there I used to go to. Jock-O used to have them over here on 52nd street.

Q: The Nixon Theatre?

B: No that was Jimmy Bishop and Georgie and all. There was another one, the State Theatre I think it was called. I used to go to all the rock 'n roll shows, I mean I just loved the music. That's how I got to DAS the love of the music.

B: Exactly.

Q: How did the manager work at that time period? How did Max Leon fit into the whole picture?

B: Well, Bob Klein ran the station.

Q: Who did you report to?

RELAYING

B: Day to day...Bob Klein.

Q: Who was the traffic manager at that time?

B: It was Irv Leon, Max Leon's brother. Originally it was Irv Leon, and then after he passed away Lois Timbers. The original program director when I got there was Bob Audry, and shortly after I got there Jimmy Bishop became the program director. Then I was the next.

Q: Tell me more about Bob Audry I don't know about him at all? White or black?

B: White guy.

Q: What was the music direction of the station at that time?

B: It wasn't like we know radio today. Each jock did their own thing. Jimmy Bishop did his style of radio, Lord Fauntroy did his style of radio, Sir Lancelot played Nina Simone and Ray Charles, Kay Williams played the blues, and that wasn't unusual in black radio then. I mean in the early 60's black radio was fragmented that way. There was gospel on it, there was a blues program, there was a jazz program, then there was the traditional R & B program, then there was big bands, but black bands, then there was Joe Rainey's Radio judge. That was the way black radio was in the early 60's late 50's, it was fragmented like that. Then with the coming of Jimmy Bishop, him and I, I was his assistant, and we started to put structure to it.

Q: How did you go about putting structure to it?

B: First of all everybody did the same kind of things. We formatted all the shows played the same music. It wasn't the same records but it was the same songs. So there was consistency. So when a person wanted to listen to DAS, they would hear the same sound no matter when they turned it on. That's the key to radio if there is a comfort zone, like you feel comfortable with what you hear, then you want to be confident that any time you turn it on that's what you're going to hear. In the early 60's that's what we started to do. Certainly personalities was still very popular then, I mean some of the greatest personalities in the world have worked at DAS. Jimmy Bishop was a great talent, Jock-O Henderson and incredible talent, Lord Fauntroy, I mean there was only one John Bandy there's never been another one since, Sir Lancelot, Goerge Johnson was a wonderful talent, Kae Williams, a great blues man. There were personalities with the music. With the early morning show with Kae Williams he still played some blues, because that's what he was noted for, but there was more consistency to the sound. That started around '64, '65. Certainly there was changes made. Larry Dailey came in, did mornings for years, John Bandy and

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

Sir Lancelot left and we brought Donny 'Soulfinger' Brooks in, we brought Buster Jones in, Charlie Neal, who is now with BET was at DAS, and Georgie was there through it all.

Q: What distinguished Georgie as an on air personality?

B: George had a great voice, a unique personality, a certain amount of warmth, George wasn't...I don't want this to sound wrong, he wasn't real flashy, but George was very smart. He was a handsome man, he had a great voice, knew the music, and he would get a crutch, whatever it was. Whether it was 'put your girdles on', he would always have a crutch. He would always have something that made him...when he cut the record potato salad...remember. George was always smart. He always had a crutch. And a crutch is something that you use to solidify your audience, and he always had a crutch. I always thought he had a great voice, and I always enjoyed listening to him because he was warm, he was informative. If there was a problem in our community he would talk about it, and not only talk about it but he would be there.

Q: Was he helpful to young dj's coming in?

B: Yeah, but not in the way you would look at it though. Like John Bandy would say you got to get a little rhyme to it.

Q: What is the line that Bandy gave you?

B: "Too tall to get over, to wide to get around." And I wrote the rest of it from there. Georgie, when I first went on the radio, he said to me 'come here, come here kid, they are not the Sooopremes, they're the Supremes'. I said thanks Georgie. He said, 'well don't do it again kid.' I said alright. He would do it that way. That would make you strive to work harder. Georgie wouldn't cuddle you and say that ain't the way you do it kid you do it like this. He'd just say, 'hey man it ain't that way it's this way'. But you had to understand George, his mind at that time was focused on the civil rights movement.

Q: Even though he was on the air everyday?

B: He went to Vietnam. We did a lot of things in the community. There was the situation with Girard College. There was the Frank Rizzo issue out on the street, the police brutality in North Philly, so he was a troubled man about troubles in his community. So he didn't have a lot of time for 'hey kid do it...', he'd say 'hey kid that's wrong you don't do it like that do it another way'. But when it started to happen for me he was one of the first to embrace me and say 'hey look why don't you come to the Uptown the people want to meet you and see you. Come on out there we'll have fun.'

RELAYING

Q: How about during the strike how did you and Georgie work out then?

B: In '65. I was inside in the sales department. Bill Voten was the sales manager at that time. They didn't want nobody to go on the air and I got on the air. That's how I got on the radio. Q: So you went on the air for the first time during the strike?

B: I was at 'DAS before going on the air, I had a 30 minute show. It was the shortest show on the radio. Monday through Friday from 10:30 to 11 o'clock at night that's when I started. It was a half hour oldies show.

Q: Who got you in initially?

B: Jimmy Bishop.

Q: How did you get in?

B: I was working there. I was a salesperson.

Q: Did you want to go on the air in the beginning?

B: That's the only reason I went into sales.

Q: I wonder if you learned anything in the sales that was helpful to you later on in your career?

B: Sure. Sales play a part in everything. I mean you can't run a radio station, you can't be a program director if you can't understand sales. Sales concepts, I mean there are all kinds of ways to sell time. You can use a package newscast, you can sell black programming, you can do a lot of things. The sales background never hurt you. And understanding the importance of sales in a radio station. It's like having a newspaper and no advertising. Soon salaries will not be there, so you have to have the knowledge that sales are very important. So it didn't hurt me to know sales.

Q: Were you selling advertisements at that time for Georgie's show? How were rates set?

B: They have rate cards. They have morning drive and afternoon drive rates, they have midday rates, nighttime rates, overnight rates, it depended on what the sponsor wanted to by or what you wanted to sell the sponsor that could do the best job for me.

Q: And the rates differed according to the time they came on?



Leandre Jackson Photo

George with WHAT owner Cody Anderson



Leandre Jackson Photo

George and former NBA player Caldwell Jones celebrating his birthday at Lakey's restaurant, 1992



Urban Archives, Temple University, Phila., PA

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

B: Morning and afternoon drive are the most expensive times. [Morning drive is from 6-9 and afternoon is from 3 to 7].

Q: So did Georgie come on during a drive time or not?

G: No Georgie used to come on at 6:30 at night. The first half hour of his show was part of drive.

Q: Did that mean his advertising rates would be cheaper?

B: Yeah a little bit, not much. He had a very popular show here. I mean the all request show that he did was very popular, and black radio was a little different than white radio. I mean the sponsors wanted to reach the people and Georgie had the big name. Georgie was a big name in Philadelphia, and still is a big name in Philadelphia. Back then he was a big name. One to be reckoned with. Sponsors knew Georgie Woods, Jimmy Bishop, they knew those names.

Q: So when they came to the sales department they would request that time?

B: You would try to sell them a flight that would cover all the day parts, but sometimes they just wanted to buy Georgie Woods or just wanted to buy Jimmy Bishop, they just wanted to buy Jimmy Bishop and Georgie Woods. Or they just wanted to buy Kay Williams, and Lord Fautroy and Sir Lancelot. So I mean it worked out. I enjoyed sales, but not as much as I enjoy programming.

Q: What about the time when somebody from the Fair Play Committee came to the station. What was that all about? Was it that dangerous or did it just appear that way? Were you threatened as well?

B: Me Georgie and Jimmy. Just the three of us.

Q: Why is that?

B: Well they thought we owned Philadelphia. They thought we owned Philadelphia so we should pay them protection.

Q: Who approached you first on this?

B: They approached everybody in the country in black radio that was in a powerful position.

Q: How did you handle it though?

B: I took my gun and went to New York. To Harlem.

RELAYING

Q: For what?

B: They put a wanted poster out here for me that I was wanted dead or alive. Me, Jimmy Bishop. and Georgie Woods. And they put their address on it, it was up in Harlem. So I took my gun and went up to Harlem.

Q: And what happened?

B: Well it got into a heated argument up there, almost got killed, but...

Q: Was it that dangerous or were they just joking with y'all?

B: I'm very serious it was very dangerous. Most of those people are dead or in jail. After that night everything was fine for me, because somebody was there that recognized me, that I was fair to them and they stood up for me and took the pressure off of me. Then, carefully working on it, the pressure was lifted off of Jimmy and Georgie.

Q: How did you manage to do that?

B: Well they weren't trying to kill me anymore or hurt me. I'm serious, very serious. I took my gun and went to New York. It was me, my brother, and Aaron Johnson, who works at the radio station till this day. Went up there, they stayed in the car and I went inside.

Q: Didn't you feel it was dangerous?

B: I lived in South Philadelphia, I grew up there, I mean if you're going to threaten me you're going to bring some shit with you. I mean how are you going to have fear after growing up in the streets of the city. It's like any other guy that's a street person, if somebody threatens you well you got to bring some shit with you. You got to bring ass to get ass. A man is a man no matter where he is. New York man is no stronger than a Philadelphia man, and if you're a wimp you're going to be treated like a wimp.

Q: So you didn't go for police protection?

B: No, what do I need police protection...where was I going to go to Frank Rizzo. What did he care about me. What did he care about Georgie or Jimmy. What did they...at that time in the 60's what did they care about us. There was George Fencil who was very good. I'm sure Rizzo was good in his own ways too, but at that point in time they was just thinking about us as...

Q: So it was a dangerous period? How long did that last a year or so?

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

B: No I got that shit off of me quick.

Q: Georgie had protection for a year.

B: Hey, I'm 350 pounds. George is a little thinner.

Q: Were they going to record companies?

B: No they were coming to us. Beating people with baseball bats. Hey listen they hurt a lot of people in the music business. From one end of the country to the other. It wasn't just here.

Q: Was it just record executives or program directors or what?

B: Anybody and everybody. Producers, writers, disc jockeys.

Q: I can't find much about it in the newspapers?

B: Cause most people were scared.

Q: Were blacks and whites together?

B: It was mostly blacks.

Q: Did they come and actually visit WDAS itself?

B: They called us at a convention one time, NATRA in Miami.

Q: Were you confronted in Miami?

B: They tried to find me, but they couldn't. I never stay at a convention site.

Q: Why?

B: Cause it was stupid. If I got to go to another city I stay somewhere else. Number one you can't get up and down the elevators, and number two I don't party and hang out and drink and carry on so I don't want to be around all that. I'm a family person, I go home to my family. When I'm in another city I like to be in a nice quiet place, have a little something to eat, watch some t.v., go to sleep till it's time to go home. Fortunately for me they were looking for me at the Ambassador Four Towers or whatever it was called, and I was on Miami Beach at the Doral on the beach. So they never thought to call me there. So I was fortunate I got out of Miami with my ass. When I got back to Philly they had wanted posters on me and Georgie.

RELAYING

Q: Were the wanted posters in Philly or New York?

B: In Philly. On poles. On poles and different places, the Uptown. I said I'm not going to put up with this bullshit I'm going to New York and get this shit taken care of.

Q: Were they were extortionists?

B: Basically that's what it was under the disguise of something else.

Q: Do you remember Abernathy being involved in it at all?

B: No I don't remember him.

Q: Were there any well known people?

B: Involved in the fair play committee? I know them all but I'm not going to mention their name.

Q: Are they that dangerous?

B: No, but that's some 20 years ago. That's like old news.

Q: Wasn't that the first time this had happened in black radio that this had happened where people actually had their lives in danger?

B: Listen to me, black radio has always been like that.

Q: Really, I have been listening to radio all my life, and I never heard nothing about that?

B: Cause we didn't air it out. It wasn't the kind of thing that we aired out. We were grown men, and we had to learn to deal with it.

Q: You mean that kind of thing happened before?

B: It happened a lot.

Q: People say they had to carry guns to work was that really true?

B: Georgie, Jimmy and me. Yeah we carried guns. Jimmy Bishop had the biggest gun I ever saw in my life. It was a 44 cowboy gun. I never seen no shit like that in my life. Georgie, everybody, I mean it was a dangerous time in society. It was also during the civil rights movement. It was dangerous times

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

for anybody that was pro-black. If you were pro-black during that period whether you were white or black your ass was in trouble.

Q: Are you considered pro-black?

B: I've been pro-black all my life.

Q: Why?

B: I just can't find anything in wronging black people. If because this man is black someone wrongs him, and the only reason is because he's black, I can't find anything right in that. So I've always been pro-black. That doesn't make me anti-white.

Q: Coming from South Philly and being pro-black did they see you as being a 'nigger-lover'?

B: Yeah. In the early days.

Q: Did they ever tell you to your face.

B: Absolutely.

Q: How did you handle it?

B: I came from a violent background so I'm not afraid of violence. I mean everyone has fears. But for somebody to address me about my preference in people, then they have a problem. See racism no matter what it is is wrong. I just can't justify it or condone it. When I came to DAS I had no problem with any people. My parents taught me to love people and treat them people fairly and all of that. When I got to DAS and I really started to see what was going on in the street of the city and what was going on in the South and what was going on here, and watching people work to help one another I realized hey I needed to get involved.

Q: I think that Bob Klein said the civil rights movement impacted him the same way?

B: Absolutely. Bob Klein was a wonderful man.

Q: What made him a good manager?

B: Forget the manager, he was an incredibly general manager, but his caring for people. If anyone taught me the right things to do for black people in this country it was Bob Klein.

RELAYING

Q: Did he discuss it with you openly? What did he say to you?

B: Everyday. It wasn't like he had some philosophy, it was like every issue. I would see him just sit there and cry. And I would say, "what's the matter Bob," and he would say 'I can't believe they would do this to people.' It would break his heart. And I loved him so much how could I not want to help in any way shape or form we could to make life better

Q: How about at NATRA conventions. NATRA was primarily black disc jockeys...

B: I was the only white disc jockey in NATRA. As far as I can remember I was the only white in NATRA.

Q: How did they accept you?

B: I was introduced to them by Georgie Woods and Jimmy Bishop. They said that I was alright, and hopefully I was alright with them. I went with Georgie and Jimmy. When I walked in they said, 'who is that white boy?'

Q: Who said that?

B: Any one of 50 disc jockeys from around the country. They'd say he's alright, this is Butterball, don't fuck with him. This is my boy. With all that Georgie and all that Jimmy had seen and the problems in the black/white...for them to reach out to me meant a great deal to me. Georgie Woods had seen a great deal in his lifetime, I mean he's lived a full life and a lot of it was not a pleasant situation. I mean he was always a big disc jockey, but he was involved in that civil rights movement up to his eyes. He was definitely involved. I mean he worked hard at it, day and night. 24 hours a day sometimes. In the 60's absolutely.

Q: He wasn't just picketing?

B: Georgie was into it and it would make him sick.

Q: How could you tell?

B: You can tell when somebody is sick from what they see. Georgie would just be sick. He wouldn't sleep, he would just come apart. I mean he was very effected to see what was happening to his people.

Q: People would come to the station?

B: Yes. Then we'd go down to 15th street to Cecil B. Moore's office. There would be a line of people down the steps out onto 15th street waiting to see

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

Cecil. Bob Klein and Georgie would go down there and sit with Cecil, "what are the problems, what do we need to do." Georgie Woods didn't go home many nights, he would sit in his office and just hold his head and be just full...of sometimes anger, sometimes hate, sometimes just compassion for people. Sometimes he would be so angry and want to lash out because what he seen happen to people. But he couldn't go home and go to sleep he would stay there until the next day. The following morning when you get there just bring him some coffee and he'd start again.

Q: Haven't you told black dj's as a white american programming black music, haven't you told them to get off their asses and look into the community?

B: Absolutely.

Q: What did you say to them?

B: Y'all need to wake the fuck up!

Q: How would you describe yourself?

B: I don't know how I see myself. I would like to think that I'm a person that is at least fair to people.

Q: You're proud of your Italian background right?

B: Absolutely.

Q: So you're not passing for black?

B: I never tried to do that. If you ask me what I am I am an Italian-American.

Q: You've been program director for how many years now?

B: 27.

Q: What makes a good program director? How do you stay in power that long?

B: Well you have to stay in touch with the people that you're trying to program to. You can never give them too much music. But the point is if you just do that then you're not doing the rest.

Q: Is that Why did you stop playing rap music?

B: Listen rap is a black art form. It should not be denied. We do play it on the weekend. We don't play during the week.

RELAYING

Q: How about during prime times?

B: We don't do that.

Q: Is it because of the demographics?

B: That's not our target audience, right. We play it on the weekend. And that's the only place we can play it without affecting our format. And we really shouldn't be playing it on the weekend but as I said it's a black art form and should not be denied. We play a touch of jazz, which nobody else does in the country, we're playing jazz now in our format. We play reggae in our format. We have a south African music show, music that was denied. We try to be.

Q: Wouldn't you say rap is different from jazz and South African music in the sense that it has a much larger audience and larger demographics?

B: I understand it's a younger audience. It's not that we don't want them. Our target audience is 25-54, 18-49, not 12-18. So that's like down the line. That's not our primary target. Now if we target that audience then it's two stations doing the same exact thing. This way we're different. Most radio stations in this country are not playing rap music, so we're not doing anything ununique. MTV is giving great exposure to rap music. Young people that are interested in rap music find out about it. We don't deny it completely. We play it on the weekends, and that's the only place we can play it.

Q: So it was banned, was it a station policy to ban it?

B: It's not a station policy to ban it, but to slow it down.

Q: Were advertisers complaining?

B: Everybody was complaining. The mayor of the city was complaining. State representatives were complaining. There children were going to these rap shows, and rap artists were grabbing their private parts and...

Q: But rock artists did the same thing though. You came up in the rock era.

B: Black people will not tolerate what white people tolerate. And you know that's right. Am I right? The black church is very very vocal. Most of the pressure against all of that came from the church.

Q: They have power but they don't have the demographics you're looking for do they?

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

B: Are they people?

Q: But you're measuring them against what audience you would have?

B: I know where you're going.

Q: So you don't have a personal prejudice against rap?

B: Naw.

Q: And the stations position isn't against rap?

B: No. It's just not what we're doing. It's a business. When does POWER 99 play it? On the weekend and once in a while in the day.

Q: You're not following POWER 99's lead?

B: We don't follow them, they follow us, but they used to play rap all day long. They still follow us. You'd find that if you listen to them. Everything we do they try to do. The difference between us and them is they have a lot of bucks to spend. Even though they're in financial difficulties. We have a lot of community work that needs to be done.

...Oftimes we who spin the records, and we who make music, and we who party don't give adequate attention to the world of political reality in which we spin our records. And I say beloved, all of us must be music conscious, but to be conscious of music means to be conscious of vibration, conscious of sound, conscious of dissonance, conscious of harmony, and if you live totally in the world of music without realizing that people make vibrations, and the reality of the way we vibrate with one another gives us dissonance or harmony. And we live in a world that is not harmonious, a world full of dissonance, and while we spin the platters that give us the beat called funk, or give us the beat called fusion, there is another drummer that is beating. And you know music doesn't mean anything if the drummer can't keep time...

---Minister Louis Farrakhan



Leandre Jackson Photo

Boogaloo Speaks **(Music Consultant)**

Q: I got a couple of questions for you about Georgie Woods?

B: That's the baddest nigger in the world that's been on the air.

Q: You think so?

B: Shit, Woods, the man with the goods?

Q: You know a lot of people. Why'd you say that?

B: Because he had what we didn't have. He had the vision of diplomacy and he had a vision of integrity and inspiration. I was the youngest in the group. Another young person can't tell you nothing but how to get in some trouble. Because he hasn't been in the world as long as you have. So when an older guy takes the time to teach you and slow you down it is appreciated. And the era that we came up in we dealt with more frustration, which they call it 'militancy'. We were frustrated trying to get somewhere, and they'd say 'oh no he's too militant.' And I was one of the main cats like that.

Q: In NATRA right (National Association of Television and Radio Announcers N.A.T.R.A.)?

B: In NATRA and radio. Woods would always say to me 'sit down, sit down and shutup let me show you something. BecCause I was headstrong. He took the time to sit down and teach me. Woods had the respect out of all the disc jockeys; Rodney, Perkins, Scottie, even my partner in New Orleans, Larry McKinley Woods had the respect of all the record companies, and the managers of these acts.

Q: That was unusual?

B: Really unusual. He's the only one in the country. They had more respect for Woods...

Q: Why was that?

B: It was his personality, his mannerisms and he didn't come begging.

Q: That's important isn't it?

RELAYING

B: Very important. **He had a word.** See a man is only as good as his word. That's what makes a man, and he had a word with these people. And they respected him for it. I came up under all of them, and watched all of them. Now Rodney, they had the greatest love for Rodney, but the respect was for Georgie Woods. Rodney was Chicago, Al Perkins was Detroit, Scottie Andrews was Atlanta, Larry McKinley was New Orleans, Frankie Crocker was New York, that was our circle.

Q: You were at what station?

B: I was in Houston, Texas at KYOK. When you talk about these guys, you're not just talking about the town, you're talking about the state. When you say Philadelphia, and Georgie Woods, you mean Pennsylvania...the whole state. When you said Frankie Crocker you talked about New York period. They controlled the area, and the other little guys fed off of these individuals. Something you don't have today.

Q: How did that change from the "personality jocks" of the 50's and 60's...

B: First let's deal with personalities. That's a term that the white folks use for us. When you took the FCC test, it was called elements 1, 2, and 9. Once you passed that, it stated on your license that you were a mass communication specialist. That means you specialize in communications. Now why they came up with personality was if you catch a born leader that can communicate, he's a communicator. They called him a personality rather than saying a communicator.

Q: So they diminished it by saying personality?

B: That's right. So now they jump out everywhere talking about "personality radio." And now they're so stupid that they say personality radio is gone, but Pepsi just paid Ray Charles \$100,000 dollars to say 'uh-huh'. So you couldn't buy these personalities, because that's what it was all about. Buying them. You couldn't buy them. They were their own men. They were in their community and that's another thing that you don't have now. That's why black radio no longer exists, because they're not in their community.

Q: What do you mean they're not in the community?

B: A radio station is licensed to the community. It takes 10 people to challenge the license of a radio station. These radio stations do not serve their community. They don't serve the black community. They're not even a part of it anymore. So when they remove these communicators to diminish their power of communicating to the black community, then they substituted them; they came in and

Georgie Woods: I Am Only A Man

deregulated radio You can send off and get your license test so anybody can be on the radio now. That does not make him a communicator, that makes him a disc jockey. A communicator took a FCC test and holds a license. His license says mass communication specialist, and he knows his job is to serve his community with education, information and entertainment through the facility of radio. Georgie Woods was a master at it.

Q: What brought about deregulation and how did it change things?

B: What they did, is kill the power. Just like every black leader we get in this world. You knock him off. It takes 5, 6, 7 years before you get another one. When we were AM stations and fighting to get the "messages in our music" to our people, we were structured all across the country. We would communicate with each other. I remember the time, just to show you how much we were in tune, we called each other and set up to play the same record at the same time across the country. We talked to each other. 'Alright we're going to play this record at 12 o'clock all across the country.'

Q: So you'd break it nationwide?

B: That's right, you could break a record in a day.

Q: Now how did that impact the recording companies?

B: They loved it.

Q: So it made you more valued in the industry?

B: Yes, but it made the industry take notice, because they could not ship all of these white records and kill the black artists. Let me explain that to you. If you go back and look at the Rock 'N Roll era you'll see Little Anthony and the Imperials, you'll see Jackie Wilson, you'll see Gene Chandler, you'll see all of these people, but when they show these people on stage you see no blacks in the audience, cause we couldn't go. We couldn't go to American Bandstand. They're around here praising Dick Clark. Dick Clark used our artists, but our folks couldn't go. You didn't see them dancing on American Bandstand. Look how they robbed Little Richard. So the true story has never been told about this. Georgie Woods was a pioneer. He stood up for the right thing. And he was in his community and connected all the way up to the City Council-up to the Mayor's office. If anything broke out in that town they'd call Georgie Woods. He was a communicator. The folks trusted him and trusted his word.

Q: When exactly did you first meet him? At a NATRA meeting or had you heard of him before meeting him?

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B: I heard of all of the heavyweights. When I started in radio and attended the functions, they told me they would fly over my town, they would fly over Texas; they didn't need Houston, Texas. I made sure that the plane landed.

Q: How did you go about making sure it landed?

B: First I established my radio station as a viable entity in the community. That's all you have. Now the white folks call it the ghetto, but it's our community. And it was after I established my radio station in the community that I established it across the country.

Q: What steps did you take to do that?

B: Well you attended all of the NATRA functions and you joined and found out who was who, who would tell you the truth and who was lying to you. And I eased along side the old guys.

Q: Was it hard to get access to them?

B: No not really to get access to them to see them and meet them.

Q: How about the poker games?

B: To be able to sit down and have a conference with them was a difficult situation, because they were into their markets and they were into each other, and you had to develop a respect and trust because it was easy to get sold out in that era. Promotion folks had a lot to do with that. They would go back and lie to the record companies in order to keep their jobs..."can't nobody deal with this man but me." So that's how a lot of stigma, bad names got out. 'Cause you know a lie would travel faster than the truth. But in getting to them, I weaseled my way in, and scratched and fought, and made them respect me. They thought I was crazy, because I really wanted to get to know them; they were very impressive. I couldn't afford to play poker but got in the poker game.

Q: When would the games occur?

B: Poker games went on all during the conference. Everyday we'd play poker, just like everyday you talk to somebody. A poker game was never about the money it was about the game of poker and communicating with each other on a level that was very personal. Because no one ever got hurt in a poker game. It wasn't designed for anyone to get hurt- poker is a kick ass game. And we were some kick ass brothers. Because we had to stand up and fight for what we believed in. So the only way we could share our hostilities was to take it out on each other, and demand the respect from each other. And that's what they taught me, the hard way.

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Q: What do you mean the hard way?

B: I lost some bucks running in there not paying attention, not being able to read, and Woods was a master at it. A master of disguises. Because if you play poker you read a persons hand, what you can see on the board, and you read a persons face. Poker has a face and everyone has that poker face. And Woods had many disguises and many faces. When you think he didn't have anything he'd be sitting there waiting in the woodshed for you to jump out there.

Q: He'd play you?

B: Wooooo Lord! Would he play you? He'd kick your ass. I mean he'd teach you a lesson that you would never forget. Him and Perkins from Detroit. Perkins would sit there and play drunk all the time, you think you got him, shit you run out there and need a life preserver. And they had a saying at the table that, "you take medicine, you don't take pots." And if you say a check they'd say there ain't no checking, you get your check where you work. You play, you bet. I mean sometimes if you're a good poker player you can bluff a person out of a hand and that's taking the pot, you've bluffed him. That's why the saying came in, "you take medicine you don't take pots, you can't bluff nothing here." Because the sons of a bitches will call you. They will call. You know I will call your ass. You take medicine you don't take no pots. It was a fun thing and these guys shared with us.

Q: Where would the games take place?

B: Different suites.

Q: How many would be in a game?

B: Sometimes as high as 6 or 7.

Q: Who were those people?

B: Georgie Woods, Al Perkins, Rodney Jones, Eddie Holland (V.P. Atlantic Records), myself, Bucky Shepherd (he was V.P. with Motown).

Q: So you had different clusters within the organization?

B: It was mostly just us disc jockeys that played amongst ourselves, and a few of the record guys that were really alright with us.

Q: So anybody couldn't just come and get in the game?

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B: Oh no! You couldn't even come in and watch. It was a very serious situation. I flew in to Chicago, and it was my birthday, and they said, "what you want to do," and I told Rodney I said, "Look I want to play poker with just the fellahs." That's like my family. I said that's all I want to do. So automatically he gets on the phone and he calls Woods and Perkins and said, "We're going to fly to Houston, Texas for Boogaloo's birthday and we're going to play poker." But at that time record companies had people on the payroll just to watch these guys...to see anywhere they went. They would go and try to service their needs...anything they wanted. Them guys were so influential and respected in the record industry. So they had guys on them, not on me, but on them in the major markets. So they flew in to play poker with me on my birthday in Houston, Texas, and I ended up with the whole record industry. I had to get a hotel. I had the whole record industry there. So that's how influential, when we talk about a Georgie Woods and a Rodney Jones and an Al Perkins and a Larry McKinley, they did a lot of good things for a lot of black artists that basically would not have gotten a shot. You have to understand something. With radio, you're looking at records, but a radio station elects mayors and governors, and chiefs of police and councilmen and shit. When you get enough of them around the country that's united, and talk to each other, they couldn't stand that man! Beause they couldn't force us to play them white records. Like you got now. You got Michael McDonald, last year as the "black top singer." The 'black top singer', R&B.

Q: So the communicator has a lot of power that sometimes they don't realize they have now?

B: Of course. Power is unity.

Q: What did the older guys have on you

B: The Magnificent Montague's. The Jack the Rapper's. One is Dave Clark, and he is the Bible. I call him daddy. He raised me. He was out of Houston, Texas with Don Robey. He's the first one to put a black record on a white station. Dave Clark, a Joe Medlin, and a Melvin Moore, out of New York. This guy right here was instrumental in a lot of, Hank Taulbert, he did a lot. He knows Georgie Woods. He did a lot in helping black artists and black entertainers get a toe hold. He's the marketing specialist. So all of these cats came behind us, and I'm here today on account of the names I gave you. My daddy was Dave Clark, and my daddy was Melvin Moore, and Joe Medlin out of New York. And Rodney Jones.

Q: When they were passing on to you were they doing it directly?

B: We would meet and sit down and discuss things, and these guys are not like the guys of today; these guys here were **true** to the community and true to the

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music, we didn't play these nothing records. And everybody got a shot. It wasn't just locked into a major situation like it is now. See the guys now play off of a major chart. We made our own chart. And we picked our own hits and stood behind them. We'd listen to all the records and say this is going to be the best record for my area.

Q: So you had more contact with the artists as well? Were A & R people still active?

B: A & R people were jokes. We were the A & R people in our era. You don't have A & R people in these record companies today. We were real true music directors, because we would sit down and listen to this music with headphones and listen to the track and then listen at the lyric content and see if this would fit, not our format but if it would fit our community. Was the message in the music, were they saying something that was viable to our community? As opposed to putting this bullshit that they have on the air today, and exciting these kids, and coming up with these porno videos and shit. We weren't about that. That's why our era was the era of real music and our catalogue would prove that, would back this up. Because the catalogue has not increased since '77, since disco. That's when they started depleting our catalogue.

Q: Boogaloo, did maintaining those strong positions require a fight?

B: Oh yeah, you had to fight. The industry is owned by the gangsters. When you go in there and demand an act to come play for your community at a fair price your life was threatened. If you didn't want to play one of those white acts or one of those black acts that weren't singing anything good your life was threatened.

Q: That was real?

B: Yeah, it's real. I've been shot six times! That's how real it is to me! At the radio station! So now if you're going to get black acts don't be a fool now...you think this boy fell out the goddamn window out there by himself? (Donny Hathaway) Niggers don't kill each other. We don't commit suicide. Look at this shit for what it really is. Look at who owns it. Who makes the money? It's just like the dope. Everytime you see them raid a house you see us handcuffed, but we don't have no planes, no train, no boat to ship shit in here. But here's a motherfucker in Washington D.C. that got the navy, the army and everything else at his disposal, but you got five fucking cartels you can't stop. What is that telling you? Woods' life was on the line everytime he marched in Philadelphia. Everytime he sided with the community his life was threatened.

Q: Woods had to have police protection at times did you know that?

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B: All the time, of course. More than one time. Rodney Jones, the first voice of Jesse Jackson, was on WVON.

Q: So Rodney caught the same kind of heat?

B: Every last one of us caught the same kind of heat.

Q: You don't hear this stuff. None of the books...

B: You're going to hear it. You're not going to hear it. Because when you read, you read about Martin Luther King and nonviolence and we were kicking plenty ass on the back of that line. When we came out of college and stood in front of Woolworth's and blocked the door, do you think that there wasn't no ass whipping? Stopping white folks from going into their store. When you got on the bus and you had one seat in the back you turned the whole fucking bus over. Ain't nobody going to ride. You think there wasn't no fights? You goddamn right! The bus come by our school, we go to get on the bus, and they got signs that say colored and you got to go to the back of the bus. That's why I don't respect none of these so-called disc jockeys today, 'cause they don't tell the truth. You had the pen and you had to have the sword too, literally. I got the marks to prove the motherfucker. [picks up his t-shirt to show gunshot wounds] That's why a son of a bitch that comes up to tell me, and ain't got a scratch on him he can't tell me shit. I don't want to hear that. Don't tell me anything about his fight. We physically stood up to the record company, we stood up to the acts, because you got some acts that's bullies and shit. Look at the acts now they run around here with bodyguards from us. Why would an act need a bodyguard if he was down with his people? Because they alienate themselves. None of these acts had bodyguards. Not the acts that we come up under. The Isley Brothers, they didn't have no bodyguards. Teddy Pendegress, the O'Jays, all of Gamble's shit, I mean all of these were viable acts... You grow old quick in this business. Every disc jockey is going to end up with some deaf ears and some bad eyesight, because of the equipment that we worked on. The rooms that we had. We didn't have the state of the art equipment that they have now. So your youthful life was given for something that you love to do. And we were true to the music and that's what is not happening now.

Q: What about the whole issue of payola?

B: That's a lie, that's a fallacy, a lie that they created to get the heat off the pop side. We've all been before the grand jury for payola. And the grand jury found out that the money was not in the black side. The money was made on the black side, but the money was not shared on the black side. When the pop side was getting cars and houses and all that kind of shit, they jumped on a disc jockey if he played a record and a guy came in and gave him a hundred dollars or something. And then in our era there was nothing wrong with that, because the



L & J Fish and Produce Market
"They were one of the first stores in the
City of Philadelphia to ever sell the chip.
I am very happy about that."-George



Georgie Woods greets a fan on a visit to Tommy's Men & Boys clothing store in North Philadelphia

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way that it was explained to me is if a guy gave you a hundred dollars and you don't claim it on your income tax then you're in trouble. They blew up a big forest that all black disc jockeys were taking money to discredit them because you had jocks that had the pulse of their community and their attention. Now it was voting power.

The Distribution Side

Enter Hank Taulbert, a longtime marketing and sales specialist in the music industry.

H: I'm Hank Taulbert I first met Georgie Woods in Detroit, in 1966. We had an artist at the time named Oscar Weathers, and I was working for Music Merchants, which was a record distributor. He had been referred to us Harold Lipschitz.

Q: What was your impression initially?

H: He was a sweetheart, no question about it. I later became friendly with him as I began to promote records.

Q: What company were you with at that time?

H: At that time I was working for Music Merchants as a promotion man at a local distributorship in Detroit. We were the distributors of Stax, Epic, Milestone, Mainstream, Prestige. I don't recall the exact name of Georgie's label. It could have been Philly LA label.

Q: This was mid 1960's?

H: About 1966.

Q: Were there many blacks working in the distribution end of it?

H: Other than working as black salesmen in the black community or black promotion men? At that time there were perhaps 3 or 4 blacks working at the major manufacturers. I think Buzzy Willis, Henry Allen, and Ewart Abner I think was still president of Vee Jay Records.

Q: Was Georgie booking acts on his show?

H: Yeah sure. They'd work together. An act would come into Philadelphia and they'd do a show for Georgie and then they'd do American Bandstand. They were the big ones in Philly at that time. From the distribution and recording

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aspect you should talk to Harold Lipschitz. The other guy is Larry Rosen. He was Universal at the time, he was an independent promoter. He had his own label. He also knew Georgie very well.

Q: Could you say how the distribution unit of the industry functioned?

H: There's the label? That's the manufacturer. The artist is signed to the manufacturer, the manufacturer sends product to the radio for airplay, and then records to distribution to get into the stores.

Q: So you're the person in between the manufacturer?

H: No, we're the person in between the consumer and the manufacturer. Air play is a vehicle to make the product more desirable.

Q: Give me three ways of selling the product at that time?

H: In those days we would go to the small black accounts 2 or 3 times a day, because they would not have the kind of cash flow to buy the kind of volume that white accounts bought. So they would buy 2 Aretha Franklin's, 1 Marvin Gaye, 2 of the Dells, that kind of thing. And you would circle back around later in the day they'd have sold those off and reorder from you.

Q: So there was a lot of direct servicing?

H: Yeah. In person.

Q: How would you interface with the radio?

H: When a record was released you had to speak with each individual personality on the air to make them familiar with that piece of product and to request that they play it for you. Their air play would then create sales at the retailers. In those days if they really liked a record they'd play it 3 or 4 times in a row and break a hit in one day.

Q: Give me the transition from that? Where did you go from there?

H: From there I worked for a rack jobber...I then went to work for a wholesale manufacturer.

Q: The manufacturer was different in what sense?

H: They were major labels. Columbia, Capital, RCA are the majors.

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Q: And you were doing marketing with them?

H: Promotion and marketing.

Q: Were you involved in any million selling records?

H: The first Sly and the Family Stone record, *Sitting On the Dock of The Bay* by Otis Redding record, which was his first gold record but he had died and didn't realize it had gone gold, Ray Parker Jr's first record, which was called "Jack and Jill," which was followed up by "Love Thing/Sex Thing."

Q: Were there trade publications that you read in order to stay abreast of things?

H: The trades that were important then were Bill Gavin's *Sheet*, *Record World* was out then, *BRE* was brand new and the only black magazine in the marketplace. Mickey Turntable, a tip sheet out of Buffalo, and Cal Rudman, out of Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Q: How important were those to you?

H: They were simply tools to give you an overview of what was happening around the country. There were more records being broken regionally then on a national scale. There was a network in which Georgie Woods, Rodney Jones, Al Perkins, the Magnificent Montague, and Scott Andrews were part of, that communicated with each other.

Q: That was NATRA?

H: Yeah. If they heard a record they thought was big they would jump on it and break it nationally. Jack Gibson at that time was in radio in Cincinnati, and he later joined Motown Records.

Q: Was Ewart Abner still at Veejay or at Motown?

H: Abner started at Veejay. I met him when he was just leaving Veejay and going to Motown, because I was from Detroit and he was there then, and have known him since then.

Q: Were there other blacks at that level at the business/marketing level?

H: He was the first one. Don Robey was the first one to own his own label. Dave Clark was the first national promotion guy, Leroy Little followed quickly behind him. Joe Medlin, Melvin Moore, Buzzy Willis, Wally Walker, those were some of the guys that came along and had their own labels. Boo Frazier is the other guy.

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Boogaloo reenters the trialogue.

Q: How about Don Robey? Did you know him?

B: Very well.

Q: Were you in radio at that time?

B: Yeah. They didn't fuck with Robey. Robey was an old black gangster. He didn't take nothing.

Q: He was made for this kind of business?

B: They didn't come to Houston, Texas, that was his area. They didn't come down there fucking with him. He didn't carry his ass north fucking with families up there. That motherfucker used to fly in here with a suitcase of money and two bodyguards.

Q: He traveled with bodyguards?

B: With a suitcase of money! That nigger would sit down and gamble a suitcase, he was in the record business. That man made money. He was one of the first blacks that had race horses. That's what you have to understand. The gangsters owned the acts. All of them. They used to take Jackie Wilson, this motherfucker would get wild, and strip his clothes and take this motherfucker and hold him in front of a furnace and shit. Them motherfuckin' crackers was hell. You goddamn right. Do you think that boy fell out that building there {Donny Hathaway} Now do niggers jump out of buildings? Now stop and think. We don't do no shit like that.

Q: So that movie the "Five Heartbeats has a lot of truth in there, huh?

B: The biggest motherfucker who was Al Bell. The one who had the biggest company. He had all of them, that's why they had to send the government. They couldn't get to this motherfucker.

Q: Nobody has written about these things. You can't find these things in the library?

B: Cause we were going before the Grand jury. This was a time when you didn't talk about. Half of them don't want to talk about it, don't want to remember it no more. The other half, too scared to talk about it. A lot of blood has been spilled. A lot of blood.

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Q: That didn't appear in the papers and magazines?

B: If they found him in the ditch with his head cut off and don't know who he is. A motherfuckin' disc jockey got sawed up. Hands, legs, feet sawed up. Out of Washington D.C. by the name of Nighthawk. Ain't nobody gonna talk about that. Someone visited in the hotel and a motherfuckers nuts busted in the bathroom. They don't want to talk about that. There was a lot of shit going on. Al Perkins is dead. Somebody came in and shot him. You couldn't get to Al Perkins. That motherfucking disc jockey ran Detroit and had hit acts at MCA at the time, they shot him.

B: Joe Robinson was a bad motherfucker. I used to fly to New York to go see Joe Robinson with my pistol in my hand. "Hey motherfucker I'm an ignorant ass nigger from Texas! I ain't here to see nobody else so y'all can get the fuck out the way cause I'm here to see the boss. You think I'm bullshitting, I got time to play? I ain't got no jail so what I'm going to take prisoners for?"

Q: The they tell you to go in?

B: You goddamn right. He had his pistol. That motherfucker... where's the place he used to stay...Teaneck. That motherfucker went in the radio station and slapped the shit out of Frankie Crocker.

Q: On the air?

B: That's right Joe Robinson wasn't nothing to fuck with. He still ain't nothing to fuck with. Joe came in the record business from the numbers game.

Q: So they bring a certain amount of experience with them?

B: It's called survival. He knew Woods. He knows all of us.

Q: Joe put fear in people's hearts, huh?

B: Naw, he just didn't fuck around. You got to understand when a person just don't fuck around. That mean the motherfucker is not to be fucked with.

Q: Not appreciating what happened before?

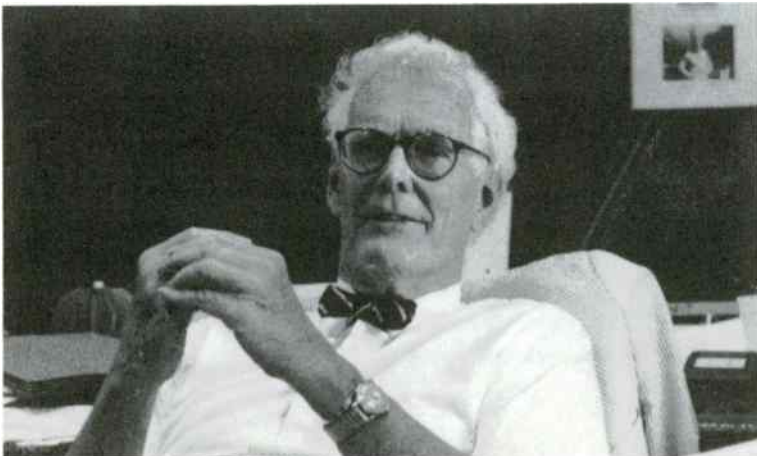
B: That means they need to make a movie of this motherfucker.



Leandre Jackson Photo



Leandre Jackson Photo



City councilman Thatcher Longstreth ran on the Democratic ticket with George in 1967

Thatcher Longstreth

(Councilman at Large and former Exec. Director of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce)

Q: I'm going to begin with your quote of March 20, 1967. "Being on the ticket with Georgie Woods was the best thing that ever happened to me. Remember, go home and tell your parents to vote." This apparently was the Freedom Show of 1967 held by WDAS Charities. What led to that statement?

L: This was the first time either of us had run for Council and we weren't exactly the organizations favorite candidates at that stage of the game. I had beaten the organization when I ran for Mayor in 1955, 12 years earlier. Georgie had been critical in his Radio Shows...(they wanted a black man and they wanted a white anglo-saxon Protestant-WASP). They had us there representing our particular part of the population and then they had the three guys whom they expected to win. They were Virginia and Tom Foglietta. They expected those two to win. I can't remember who the fifth was. It could very well have been Walter Phillips.

Q: Yes, it was Walter Phillips.

L: We were running with Arlon Specter (Arlen Specter) and Specter was the candidate for Mayor. Georgie and I gravitated to each other right from the very beginning for two reasons: One, because we were friends, we liked each other. Two, we were on the outs sort of with the organization. We were a little bit concerned as to how much support we were going to get from the organization. And whether we were going to be cut in favor of someone else. Because in those days, particularly in the Republican election where you were sure that the two Republicans were going to be nominated, some of the Ward leaders were sort of bought up...

Q: In advance?

L: In advance, that's right. And then they would either, cut you or else they would run your opponents.

Q: How would they cut? What was the process?

L: Well, it's pretty easily done. For example, I'm a committee man. And so you would come into the polling place and the first thing I do is, give you a Republican ballot. And you look at the ballot and it says, "Vote For...". Then it has this beside Georgie Woods, the fellow they're going to cut. Instead of having the five Republicans that are slated, they have four Republicans. But instead of Georgie Woods, it has some Democrat whom they're going to push. Or if they don't want to push a Democrat they'll only have four Republicans, they

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wouldn't have a fifth. They'll do little things like that and sometimes it's not because somebody else is trying to cut you. But they've decided to use you as the balance on the person that they're trying to push. So that if for example, let's say that I've decided that I'm going to push Jack Kelly on the Democratic side, okay. So I come in and say, be sure to vote for Jack Kelly, if you're Republican. 'Cause Jack Kelly is Democrat, basically. So when I say, push Jack Kelly, they're going to find somebody to drop. So they say, "Well who do I drop, oh, we'll drop Georgie Woods. He's just the easiest guy to drop." Or maybe he's in a white area. And so he says, "Well, Georgie Woods, he's a black man. Oh, we don't want him." Well, then drop him, you know, cut him. But he's getting paid by the Kelly people. So if they're black, he doesn't say, "put out Georgie Woods," he says, put out Thatcher Longstreth." Whoever. That was done an awful lot in those days, cutting. And so I'm either cutting somebody or I'm pushing somebody. And if I'm pushing somebody, I'd rather not have to cut somebody. And the big difference there is your intent. Because in some instances, you are cutting Georgie Woods because somebody has paid you to cut him. In some instances it is essentially a racial thing. Where you're in an area that's predominantly white or you're dealing with a district or a committee man who is very white oriented or black oriented. Could go either way. And that becomes the reason for it...

Q: Is it also a factor in terms of what campaign funds are allotted for a candidacy?

L: Yes, street money.

Q: Stick to street money.

L: That's how the street money is spent, really. Now, there's another factor that enters into it as far as street money is concerned. You don't know if you're going to get your value or not.

Q: You don't know what?

L: You don't know whether you're going to get any value or not. Because I'm the committeemen, you pay me and I say sure, sure, sure and then I go ahead and do whatever I want to do. I put your fifty dollars in my pocket or one hundred dollars in my pocket and there's no guarantee on that one. In the old days sometimes they'll tear a bill in half and give you half. And they say, "I'll give you the other half when I see the figures," after the election.

Q: Do they really do that?

L: Oh, yeah.

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Q: They'll take a five dollar bill, and one half...

L: Give you half, keep the other half. They'd say, "now, you're going to run my guy a one hundred votes ahead of the rest."

Q: If you don't do that?

L: If you don't do that, you don't get the other half. Or if you do, they make you pay two dollars and fifty cents for it or something like that because you didn't do what you were supposed to.

Q: By 1967, now that wasn't the case, was it? They weren't tearing bills in half?

L: No, no. I've heard stories of how that was done. In 1967 there was a great deal of cutting going on.

Q: In the primary and general?

L: In the general and the primary.

Q: So the primary was no problem?

L: See, in the primary, I'm talking about the Republican primary. In the Republican primaries. No, you got to realize that there's an enormous difference between the Republican primary and the Democratic primary.

Q: What is the difference?

L: Well, the Democratic primary. The top five Democrats that are nominated always get elected. In other words, in the fifty years that this system has been in effect no one of the five Democrats who are nominated for the at-large position, council-man-at-large have ever been beaten. And the only Republicans who have ever won have been the two Republicans that have run sixth and seventh. No Republican has ever beaten a Democrat in an at-large. So that the nomination as far as the Democratic primary is concerned is you're a sure winner. Once you've been nominated, you don't have to spend a nickel; you don't have to campaign; you don't have to do anything.

Q: You're guaranteed.

L: You're guaranteed to win. On the Republican side, on the other hand of the five people that are nominated, they are very sure to lose, and the only two that are going to win are probably the two that are already in.

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Q: The incumbents.

L: Because that's the other aspect of it. In those fifty years, only two Republicans, who are incumbents, have ever been beaten. And they're both beaten by me. So there's not much desire for people, you don't exactly have people standing in line for the councilmatic spots. Because a) it's automatic you're not going to beat a Democrat and it's almost equally automatic you're not going to beat either of the Republicans that have those guaranteed seats. So the three you'd find, here are the Democrats up here, then here the two Republicans, here. Then here are the other three Republicans down here. And usually there's a lot of space between them. I mean in this last election, Joan Specter ran twelve votes behind me, that's how close we were. And then the next person below her was fifty-nine thousand. It's no way you're going to make up fifty-nine thousand. Twelve votes you can make up very well. If I put out a few bucks I could've made it thirty votes. Joan, if she would've put up a few bucks she could've beaten me. That's of course where Georgie got the...

Q: What happened, how did he get...?

L: Well, what happened there? First of all, we have the five people that are nominated. Georgie and I don't spend any money.

Q: So there's no money allotted by the party? You didn't have allotted checks at all?

L: That's right, exactly right. The party allocates its money essentially to the Mayor. And the councilmen-at-large pretty much spend their own. Because we're only going to get two seats anyway. So there's no sense wasting any money on us. Then sometimes if they got a couple of district seats where we have a good shot, one in South Philadelphia, one up in the Northeast, they'll allocate some money there. But generally speaking, in the local election like this one we're talking about now, the money that is spent by the councilmen-at-large is their own. In this particular instance, neither Georgie or I had either had very much money, or felt that they were going to be willing to spend it in his. Georgie was a pretty successful businessman and he had a pretty good income from his radio business, etc. I was a fledgling advertising man, and I didn't spend any money at all, I told the party when I went in, you think I'm going to spend a lot of money, you're crazy. I don't expect to win, I think the two incumbents will win.

Q: You didn't expect to win?

L: No, no.

Q: Yet, you had 330,000 votes.

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(Shows the councilman the 1967 election returns)

L: Let's see how far down...?

Q: You're 330,726. Now, who's second, Foglietta?

L: Foglietta, 325,000. So I ran about a little over 5,000 ahead of him. So that was pretty tough for me. Now, he only ran just a couple of hundred ahead of Georgie. Phillips was pretty close up there too. So there was not a lot of hanky panky because the difference between a top guy or a bottom guy is only about six thousand votes (6,000) votes. So that's very, very close.

Q: So was Virginia an incumbent?

L: Yes, she was an incumbent. So look what she ran, she ran fourth, much to her surprise. When she ran, she ran behind Georgie by about five or six hundred votes. Now, on the other hand, if you look up here, Boyle, he only ran about two thousand (2,000) ahead of me. Russ now got fifteen/sixteen hundred, ahead of me. Here's a guy who ran behind Boyle, Cantor, Eddie Cantor, or is that Edgar Campbell. That's Edgar Campbell.

Q: Yes, that's Edgar Campbell.

L: He was three forty-six and I was three forty-five. So I was only about nine hundred votes behind Campbell. I had forgotten it had been that close.

Q: What about the absentees?

L: You can manipulate that a little bit.

Q: How?

L: Well, the votes that are on the machine, they're kind of hard to fool around with. What you really have to do if you want to make a change on the machine, is just simply to write down the wrong figure on your tab. So what you'd do, let's say, if there was a figure that ended in, sixty-eight. Well, you'll make it eighty-six. That's an honest mistake.

Q: Invert it?

L: Yes, invert it. You do it yourself, everybody does it all the time.

Q: If you did it enough, many times you'd have too many votes that way.

L: And particularly if you're not doing it with the votes in the thousands. You're

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doing it with the votes on the end. So you do a few here, a few here. That way, when it's as close as this election, it was a terribly close election. Because even the Republicans were close. Where you figure that instead of the usual fifteen/twenty thousand differential, it was less than one. That's what happened in the last election in 1987. Joan Specter was only eight or nine hundred votes, and so was I, behind (football player) ?Perot. So when it's that close maybe you only have to fiddle with a few. But the stuff that I'm talking about, where you're manipulating the votes ahead of time. When I'm making deals, you're making deals before people vote. After they vote, when the counting starts, now that's when they're two ways of doing it. One, is in reporting on what has happened.

Q: The person who actually reports it, puts it in the ledger?

L: That's correct.

Q: Who would be the person responsible for doing that?

L: Well, it's the people over there in the commission. In the commissioner's seat, that's where that's coming from. It's not done at the ward level.

Q: I went back to try and find the initial ballots, and the earlier returns. They're no longer, they've been replaced by the final results.

L: Right, right, right.

Q: So the earlier ones are thrown out when the final are brought in.

L: That's right.

Q: So how do you know what the earlier ones were?

L: Well, that's one of the reasons why in the old days they used to manipulate that thing because they wanted people in there that were crooked.

Q: Would alter the whole bit, huh?

L: Would alter them, yeah. Both parties...

Q: It wasn't exclusive?

L: It wasn't exclusive. It was organization that was doing it.

Q: Party organization?

L: Yeah, party organization. And when they screwed you that way, it was being

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called, "counting them out," being counted out.

Q: It's called "counted out."

L: It's like a prize fighter being knocked down and counted out. You're counted out here because you won. But they screwed you and you got counted out.

Q: So it's commonly believed that Georgie actually won that election?

L: I certainly believe it, and I think that most people did. See there's another aspect of it, that in those days, none of these things are true to the same degree today at all. I mean not even close. This period I'm talking about, 1955, that was the first election after the Democrats had won in 100 years, where the Republicans hadn't been in. The Republicans had been in for years and years, solid. And they control everything. All of a sudden in 1951, they loose. Now this is the first election coming up...1955. I beat the organization in a primary, which is totally unusual, etc. Then we go on and start to manipulate things around. Now time goes by and now it's 1967. Well, things are now, Republicans are totally outnow, a good share of them become Democrats. There is still a good deal of chicanery going on. There is some cheating going on here and there. But, nowhere near what was going on before. Let me just give you just one example of how extreme that could be. I went around on primary day in 1955 by the 19th ward. And I walked into a place where a guy named Greenberg is a committeeman. So, I say, "Hello Greenberg" and he says "Hello Longstreth." We dance around with our arms around each other because he's got a bit Longstreth button and he's for me. "So, how you think I'm going to do?" This is nine o'clock in the morning. "Oh", he says, "I can tell you how you already did." I said "What do you mean?." "Well you won by 688 votes," he says, "here are the figures right here." "Well," I said, "how did you get those figures?" "Well," he said, "I went around a couple of weeks ago and I got the people to sign here and then I filled in the rest for you."

Q: Pre-committed.

L: Not only pre-committed but pre-voted. Huh, huh. Imagine that. So, I ended up with the sure enough, I looked in the paper the next day, I carried that division by 688 votes. About 6 months later, it had a general election. Greenberg has now become a Democrat because he had a job with the state and when the Governor lost, the Republican governor, the Democrats controlled the State for the first time in a long while. They went to him, very good committee men. They said, "You could do well on our side and we'll let you keep your job." So, he keeps his job and I go up to see him. Well friend, how'd we do? Well, I'm not an old friend anymore, I'm a Democrat now, He said, "I'll beat your ass in." And I said, "You did?" He said, "Sure." I said, "How badly?" He said, "Oh, 688." He used exactly the same number because he was sending a

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message to the Democratic party. "I can produce 688 votes and I don't care what party I'm with and who the candidate is. I can deliver those votes so you better keep my job." Fascinating.

Q: Was that fairly common?

L: Oh, yeah in those days it was quite common. There was a guy named Meade who was one of the big Republican powers.

Q: You were more in line with Meade than Meehan at that time?

L: That's right.

Q: In fact in the beginning, then you changed it?

L: Well in the beginning I was against them all.

Q: Right, in the very beginning.

L: Then, Meade came to me and said, "We think that you could beat Dilworth and we think you're going to win this thing, so we're going to come over on your side." I never made any deal with them. I never gave them any money, never did anything. They just figured I was going to win so they just climbed on board.. And that was very helpful.

Q: What was this feud between Meade and Meehan?

L: Well, they had four guys that ran the whole operation.

Q: Who were they?

L: Well, the most powerful was Meehan because he had the 35th ward. He was sheriff. Sheriff Meehan, Bill Meehan's father. Sheriff Austin Meehan. And he was the big Republican, sort of, power. Political power. Then Bill Meade, and Meade had a political job and he ran what was the control vote. That vote sort of downtown. It was a tenderloin of such. The people were poor, the people were very politically oriented and crooked as an...

Q: What wards would they have been?

L: They'll be down in Center City, at the 5th and the 8th were the two primary wards that gave him most strength. They called it the bloody fifth because there were people killed there at some of the political shenanigans that took place there.



Campaigning with Senator Ted Kennedy



**George at the five-n-dime in North Philadelphia
with fans-and a bag of chips**

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Q: Literally killed?

L: Oh, tough place, very tough place. The 5th & the 8th. It was the two downtown wards. And it was made up of high level people who had a lot of money, living in the big apartments, and then poor folk living all around.

Q: Were they powerful wards?

L: Oh, they were very powerful. A lot of people. And because they were controlled, the lower, those wards could go any way Meade wanted them to. He could...And as you go down those wards you can see where those things are. And look how close they were, they were really close. And as you say, on the absentee...

Q: But surprisingly Georgie had a large number in Torresdale.

L: 252 for wards, and he picked up another 240 votes on absentees. Absentees were always easier to manipulate.

Q: How?

L: Well, when you had the votes, they came in on the machines. You had to change a machine, which you couldn't do or else you'd have to make a deliberate miscount. And either of those could be picked up fairly easily. But counting, these are paper ballots. They could be lost, they could be changed, they could be thrown away. So when it was a real close election and they were manipulating the recount. It didn't happen pretty often, of course. Why that...

Q: Do you recall your reaction when you realized that Georgie had been counted out?

L: Oh, I was disappointed. I had liked Tommy because we ran together in 1955. He was running for Council when I was running for Mayor, and he was a very young councilman, etc. But, I figure a guy won, and I'd gotten very, very close to Georgie cause we did all of our campaigning together. I see most of the music accounts tell...

L: We went all over Philadelphia together. 'Cause we'd go up in the black areas and everybody knew him and then we get up in the Northeast, etc., Northwest and they all knew me. And so then I'd introduce him as the guy they should vote for. In the other areas he'd introduce me. And it was the first time that a black guy and white guy had run together, that closely. And had been so obviously friendly and coming from the same side of the fence. And Georgie had always, always just treated me fine on his radio show, thereafter, as a gesture of appreciation. And we've been friends to this day.



Ms. Shirley Dennis

Shirley Dennis

Q: How'd you first hear of Georgie? Not your first meeting him, now. When did you first hear of him?

D: When our family moved to Philadelphia (from New York), I was fifteen years old. And Georgie Woods was, "the guy with the goods." And we listened to him every morning before I went to school. I just remembered that he was just so lively. You just enjoyed it because he was so full of life and he always had something to say and it was just a great program. It seems my mother said to me that this guy used to be in New York.

Q: When did you first actually see him?

D: I first met him in early 1960's.

Q: Early 60's. At the time of the Civil Rights Movement?

D: I was active with the Fair Housing Movement. I was just beginning to be active with the NAACP through Delores Tucker. I used to sell real estate for Tucker and Tucker.

Q: Was Delores active in the NAACP at that time?

D: Yes, and she got me involved in the NAACP. And she was involved with the march around Girard College. I got involved and that's when I first think I actually talked to Georgie was once that activity got started. Then I was involved with the Tribune Charities.

Q: Was he raising money for them at that time?

D: Well, Delores would get Georgie and all her friends, she was heading up the Tribune's Charities' dinner one year and I think that's how I finally got a chance to talk to Georgie. I think we were sitting together, or something. That's my earliest recollection.

Q: So what was your first impression upon meeting him?

D: He seemed almost shy. It was so interesting to meet him and to see that he was a kind of quiet person. Quiet spoken, not shy. I don't mean shy, but sort of soft spoken. A much more thoughtful, quiet person than he would appear to be on the air. On the air he was all energy. And then when you met him you realized that he was a deep thinker and a very sensitive and caring person.

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Q: Did you attend the Freedom Shows at that time? At the Convention Hall?

D: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: I was wondering because that's something Delores was very much involved in. Were you involved in that as well?

D: Well, because of Delores, I would go to all those kinds of events. I tended to gravitate to events that the realtors gave. They would have banquets and they hosted The National Realtors Association in Philadelphia one year. Maybe '63 or '64. And Delores was active in all those kind of things. It was very interesting because I should tell you why I think I gravitated to those affairs. When I graduated from high school I went to Cheyney State College for a year and I met my first husband there. We married after the first year and I had three small children almost back to back. Three and a half years apart. And then my marriage broke up, and I was only twenty-three years old. I had my real estate license, because while I was married my husband and I took these classes in real estate and I was the one that pursued it. Got my license and the Tuckers agreed to sponsor us because they knew his family. So I was a young woman trying to make a living for a family and I could not afford to be involved in a frivolous way. I had to make some hard decisions about my lifestyle. I decided that I couldn't afford to socialize a lot. I enjoyed public community work so I got involved with our local recreation center. And that's how come I responded to Delores' plea to get helpers and volunteers for the NAACP, for the Tribune Charities and for any event that she was involved in. It was a way to get out, to be among people, to socialize and to do good, and yet not have to spend a lot of money that I needed to really spend on my family, on my children. So that's how I really got involved as such a young person. I knew all the personalities like Mary Mason, that came really within Delores Tucker's world. I knew them sort of through her. I saw a lot of Georgie because she and Georgie and Mary were very close to King. And Alphonso Deal, they were always, always talking.

Q: What was your impression of King when he first came to Philly? Were you with the NAACP that year?

D: Yes, I was there until 1966. I was there from '61 to '66.

Q: Very pivotal years for the NAACP. So you remember Higginbotham's period in the NAACP?

D: Yes, yes. Met him during those years. Yeah, I know about the struggle between Cecil Moore and Delores Tucker and that was what split her and Georgie to some degree.

Q: So how did you as a young person respond to all of that? Seeing them being

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pulled apart?

D: When you were asking me what I thought about all this I can tell you that I had my own mind. And I basically really disagreed with Delores.

Q: Did you express it to her?

D: Yes, basically. I think they wanted us to go up to New York. The three of us...

Q: And did you go?

D: I wouldn't go up there. I just couldn't.

Q: Well, didn't you think you were risking by not doing that at that time?

D: Well, I was just always a person that had to speak my own mind.

Q: Even if it meant your job?

D: Well, remember now, I was in a situation where I had already gone through an awful lot, a marriage that had broken up. I'd been through a lot. So I was not, a person that was afraid to say what I think.

Q: Was this your first big decision like?

D: The biggest decision as an adult was to retain my home. When my first husband and I broke up. To keep a home I really couldn't afford. I did not have enough money coming in a month to really carry the mortgage a month. My parents said, "Well come back home." And I said, "No, because if I came back home it will be four children that you'll have to have. Me and my three daughters. And since I'm an adult now I'm going to stick it out.

Q: How did you manage to overcome that?

D: Sheer audacity. I don't know how I did it. But I encourage women today to try it. I think that what it did was it caused me to focus on what I had to get done and not on other things like this man that didn't do me right. You hear the women that talk about that for the next twenty years. Instead of focusing on the guy that didn't do me right, I focused on what I had to get done to put my life back in order. I really sort of think that sided with Georgie on that. I really thought that he was the guy that had it in perspective.

Q: Did you ever express it to George?

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D: I don't know if George and I ever talked about it. But I really thought he was the one who had it in perspective. It wasn't that he thought Cecil Moore was perfect. Or even that he agreed with all the things that Cecil said, but I think Georgie's point was, we got to hang together regardless of what goes on. I felt that that was the reason why he and Delores sort of parted ways a little bit. I don't think they fell out but they parted ways a little bit. Because I think Georgie felt so strongly that there was no reason to cut out that strong leadership like that. And I think he was right on that.

Q: Do you recall occasions when Cecil, George and Delores were working together?

D: Oh yeah, I remember the earlier days. That's what I'm saying, people don't really realize that they were...I remembered that. See Delores has a fabulous personality. I was really privileged to get to really know her. And she's a very strong willed person. She did this because she believed it was the right thing to do. She did not do it just to hurt Cecil. But she felt that he was, at that point, hurting the black community. I felt that he should not have bragged to Time Magazine.

Q: That kicked it off right?

D: That did it.

Q: Wasn't there a little ego involved on both parts. Delores and his part?

D: Yeah, yeah. What was funny is that every time Cecil would come up, they would try to get somebody to run against him. And I remember that well, too...he'd smash them. I remember they tried to get Leon Sullivan, and Leon said, "Nooo." He wouldn't do it. He had went to school with Cecil. And they came from the same area. He said, "No way."

Q: But he got the pastor, Henry Nichols?

D: Yes, right. And Cecil just slaughtered him. Cecil slaughtered him. And I remember they tried to get Higginbotham. I don't think he agreed. He had been it once. He had been before Cecil and he wouldn't agree to do it again. And then they finally got Henry Nichols. Sometimes I would answer the phone, because I was their sole manager. So I would sometimes answer the phone if the office secretary wasn't available. I would talk to all kinds of people. Like, she was very close to Congressman Nix. And Old Man Gray also. Gray Sr. She was very active with all these people.

Q: How did it help you later on in life?

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D: Well, it was extremely helpful when I emerged in my own right as a community activist in the 70's and people began to know my name. I knew a lot of the why and where and how the community/political structure worked in Philadelphia, because I had been able to observe that generation that was just ahead of us that were well known. I was able to understand how they functioned, how they interacted with one another. It became something that fascinated me about Philadelphia that is the fact that we have so much talent in this city. Seems to me if you think about most of the fights in the black community at the professional level came from a lot of people having capabilities who were fighting over who could best do the job. Very, few slots. There was all these people that said, "Look I could do it just as well as you." And very few slots. But the talent in this city is outstanding. I don't know if I've seen such a rich array. And such a large cadre of professional legal and political types as I've seen in this city. I estimated in the 70's that my husband and I interacted and worked with well over a hundred people that any name that I called you would know and most people would know in the city.

Q: Were you already a Republican in the 1967 election?

D: I was probably working for the Redevelopment Authority by that time. Okay, I was not yet a Republican. I was still a Democrat. But my father was a life long Republican. So in our household we always dealt with Republicans in an acceptable fashion. We never saw Republicans as the enemy. Also my mother supported Nixon even though she was a Democrat. She supported Nixon. And was going to support him in '68.

Q: Were you surprised at all when George ran as a Republican and ran on the party ticket in '67?

D: Not at all. Not at all, because of the fact that my father was from Florida and was a life long Republican and George was from Georgia.

Q: Did that have something to do with it?

D: Oh, yes. Well ever since after the Civil War, blacks who were from the South... You know a lot of Northern blacks don't know this, but blacks who were from the South saw Democrats as the enemy, because it was the Democrats who were the Dixiecrats. And it was the Democrats who beat blacks who wanted to vote, it was the Democrats that kept them from being able to vote. And it was the Democrats that passed all the negative laws that impacted blacks in the South. My husband is sixty-three so he wasn't even born until 1929. And to this day his position is he would never be a Democrat. Because of what he saw as a young man in the 40's in the South. In terms of how the Democrats who controlled the government function. So he feels as strongly as some of these Democrats who are forever talking about "How could you

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become a Republican!" I mean, so it's very interesting, but in a city where the Democrats so dominate you don't hear that side that much. But my father felt the same way, he just never said much about it. He would have never been a Democrat. Because coming out of Florida, where it was the Democrats who didn't let you register and vote.

Q: So given that context it isn't too unusual for George to have been under the Republican ticket?

D: Not at all. In my household we didn't think it was odd at all. I've never had any problem with George becoming Republican, and was not surprised when he initially was announced as the winner of that election.

Q: You weren't surprised?

D: It did not surprise me at all.

Q: Were you surprised when it was announced that he was not the winner?

D: [Laughter]. I thought that was a real turning point for Georgie.

Q: Explain that?

D: I think that it was from that point on that Georgie never ever again had any real faith in the political system. I think it was very profound. I think up to that time he had the hope and the kind of youthful innocence that we all have initially. And I just felt that that was just devastating to him. I think it had such a long term negative impact. I think he went on to do great things, but I think that had that not happened to him there's no telling where he would have gone politically.

Q: His faith in the political system became dismantled at that point?

D: I think so. I think even though he continued to participate in it, and be involved I think that he was never able to fully believe that it would really work.

Q: Do you feel he actually won the election?

D: I think that the numbers said he did.

Q: What do you think happened?

D: They said they counted absentee votes if I recall. And what can you say. I had voted absentee. I want my vote counted. I mean I think that it's impossible to work in the system, believe in the system and believe that the election was

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stolen from him. It's impossible to do both. You can't have it both ways. So I have to believe that they really came up with those absentee ballots. Otherwise I would have a very difficult time functioning within the system. I have to believe that you can win an election against all odds in this area. Thatcher has gone on to also play in the system and be successful. So evidently his lost to Rizzo, for instance, didn't devastate him or anything. And so he was able to come back and came back until he found a place for himself.

Q: So are you saying different personalities are able to adjust differently?

D: And I think it has to do with him being white and Georgie being black.

Q: Do you think the race issue was an important factor in that?

D: Oh yes, because I don't think blacks have as many opportunities to come back.

Q: You think Georgie couldn't come back?

D: Probably. Did he? No he didn't, I know. Where could he have gone politically after that race?

Q: There weren't many options after that, was it?

D: After that race, he could have come back and run against Foglietta four years later, perhaps. Who knows? I don't know. I don't know what he should have done. But I know that Thatcher was able to lose a big race and then a few years later come back, be a city councilman, and is now one of the most loved Republican politicians in town.

Q: How would you characterize the leadership at that time period? How would you characterize the relationship of blacks within the party?

D: Well see that was still very early for me, cause I was still a registered Democrat. So I had not had a chance to assess the Republican party. I guess I assumed that there were very few blacks in the Republican party. So I assumed that blacks had done what they did in other cities. That is with the Roosevelt election, abandon the Republican party. And once the abandonment took place, the people weren't even trying to make the party responsive to them. And I think whenever you have a situation like that, then the white communities go on and basically think about their own group. I think that they then function within their view. Until we come back and say, "Oh, wait a minute you got to expand this thing a little bit." Then the fight is on. [Laughter]. Cause that's how I view politics. I don't view politics as I'm in this party, cause I think all these people love me and want to help me. I choose a party and then I fight.



"The building we lived in...", Harlem, 1992

Kal Rudman

(Publisher and Editor of *Friday Morning Quarterback*
a trade publication for the recording and broadcast industry)

Q: What sensitized you to be able to realize the importance of Black music?

A: Well in my case I was born and raised in the ghetto.

Q: In what city?

A: Philadelphia.

Q: What part of the city?

A: Well, when we started, we were at 30th and Oxford Street. And then we ended up in the heart of the North Philly ghetto, at 7th and Berks.

Q: When you say we, do you mean your parents as well?

A: We had a little grocery there. A little delicatessen. So I was totally immersed and raised in the culture. And Kal loved the music from the time I could hear music. It was there. Blues, all of that stuff. And I heard it. And I was a litmus paper, but didn't know it at the time. I had this gift I was born with. I became considered the expert in R&B.

Q: Do you recall when you first met George?

A: Yeah, well once I went on the air, Georgie fell in love with me. My air persona. I was the greatest thing since margarine. To this day he still calls me "Big Beat". He just said I was a wild crazy man. Well I was. And I would play 6 to 10 records in a row, and I'd bust them wide open. Now of course George was so powerful then, as your research shows. You knew the next day if you had a hit, off Georgie's play. When I went on the air you knew within a couple of days if you had a hit. Because again, I had no competition at all. And I had all the kids up all night listening.

Q: What time were you coming on?

A: Midnight, 12 to 6. They'd bring me these new records, I'd listen to them and I'd pick the hits out of the pile. Nobody could do that. Most of the Disc Jockeys had a tin ear. They couldn't hear nothing and they couldn't find their way out of the elevator when it got to the ground floor. Today, a program director makes the decision, assisted by a music director.

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Q: At that time you had full reign to choose the pieces you wanted to play, is that right?

A: Yeah, that's right.

Q: There was a program director at WDAS, wasn't there?

A: All the disc jockeys had free reign. This was before all the trouble started.

Q: Was there a program director at that time?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did he do? Why didn't he control it more?

A: It couldn't happen. It's a business and it's a world of envy, the green eyed monster.

Q: And who was the program director at that time?

A: Jack LaMar, who is a very famous horse race announcer. And he said that they said, "Who the hell does this son of a bitch think he is?" He said, "Well I don't know who he thinks he is, but I'm in the business of mass audience." All I know is, is that all the guys they have ever had on that show, everybody went to sleep. He had more records left in his mailbox then I had ever seen in my life. He was making more noise than I had ever seen. My brain works all the time. And I went to see George's shows at the Uptown. And I'd sit backstage and see all the superstars. So I went to George, I said, "Well George, you and Irv Nahan, you're in business. Promotion is the name of the game, right? Now I got all his time, all this freedom, when your last show is over. I don't, know around midnight, you know how these musicians are, they want to keep on doing their boogie. Would you have them come over across the bridge? 20 minutes away or less. I'll put them on the air, we got a big promo. I'll interview them and let them boogie and let them jam all night long." I said, "We'll set this city on fire George. Well he went for it. He thought it was great. And I had so many of his shows. This is the Summer of '59 and if you had a list of the people that were there, it was scary. Nobody went to sleep in this town. And all of a sudden the lines at the Uptown theater went around the block, because the whole town was listening, and they heard this jam, and they knew they had to go see that show. it was an incredible experience.

Q: How many years did they do this?

A: Just mainly that summer. It was a wild summer.

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Q: Did it popularize the show?

A: Yeah, but not only that, it delivered a huge white audience.

Q: Now, had you know Irv Nahan prior to knowing George?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was your relationship with Irv?

A: Good friends. he was a great basketball player. He was a very warm friendly man. He likes everybody and everybody likes him.

Q: How would you characterize Irv and George's relationship?

A: They were business partners. The success that George enjoyed was extraordinary. It was once in a lifetime. Because he had numbers, he had an audience. It was unbelievable. He had power that was unbelievable. He handled it beautifully in retrospect. He didn't get into no jams that I know about. And he worked very hard, he put in very long hours. He lived his work and he worked his life. It was non-stop work. I don't know when he slept. I did see him knocked unconscious once. Did you hear about that?

Q: That was at Freedom Show, wasn't it?

A: Yeah.

Q: What happened that night?

A: Well George got careless, he'll tell you. He got very, very careless.

Q: But what happened?

A: Gilda was there, and he leaned over on the stage, that was the wrong thing to do. It happened so fast. Some thugs grabbed him.

Q: Some thugs?

A: Well I use the word thugs. I mean who would do this to a man like that. Some jealous son-of-a-bitch bastard. And I don't know whether he got hit in the jaw or what. Somebody unloaded on him. He was out cold. And Gilda was hysterical.

Q: Do you recall visiting him in the hospital?

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A: No I didn't think I could do that. How long was he in? Well anyway, the point that I'm making is that he trusted me, and obviously that was essential, because there was nothing but snakes in the grass. Because it was competitive and it was show business here in Philadelphia. And Georgie knew that people were gonna cow-tow to him, and any other important disc jockey. It had nothing to do with friendship or any kind of affection, or anything like that. It was strictly business. He knew his mane was written in a guy's rolodex in pencil. You like that?

Q: Out real quick.

A: George knew that to a T. That impressed me a lot about him. I mean I read him like a comic book.

Q: You began to mention the issue of social privilege. Come back to that point. You were mentioning that George may have seen you as having an advantage that he didn't have, is that right?

A: No I didn't say that.

Q: How would you characterize that relationship?

A: I don't know how George really saw me. He'd have to tell you that.

Q: How did you perceive him as seeing you?

A: He made it plain that he liked me. He made it plain that he trusted me. He was right. he knew he could trust me, because there was never ever gonna be anything to this day where I would betray that trust. 'Cause that's the type of man I am. And that's why he's successful and that's why I'm successful. 'Cause in life you know that can take you a long way. That's the point I'm trying to make. George was not easy to get to. His guard was up, as it should. It's hard to explain how big George was, if you weren't there. He was bigger than big. Joe Niagara was on in the afternoon and HyLit was on at night, on WIBG which was known as WIBAGE (the first and most powerful top 40 station). You see, these guys were pulling 60 and 80 shares. Which means what it says. 60, 70, 80 percent of the people at various times, listening to the radio, were listening to them.

Q: What kind of share did Georgie have at this time period?

A: Well you got to remember he was on 7 to 11. On WHAT the signal, as it still is, was impossible. It died at sunset, at 1340, it was on the far right hand side of the dial, which in AM radio is a tremendous disadvantage in coverage. Whereas on WDAS there was a much more powerful signal than WHAT, but

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still didn't go over to Jersey, and was not heard in sections of the city.

Q: Despite the wattage, didn't he have a considerable audience?

A: Absolutely. He had the total Black population.

Q: How much of the white population did he have?

A: It vary.

Q: Were there particular sections that you could identify?

A: It might have been sometimes 30 percent or 40 percent. And you got to remember they could drive in to where they could hear. Not only that, you must remember he was on television.

Q: That's right.

A: Channel 48.

Q: But before that channel 17, right? Would you characterize it as a relationship? You both profited from this relationship, is that right?

A: It was symbiotic.

Q: How did you profit and how did George profit, in specific terms, Kal?

A: I wasn't in a position to profit, other than to establish my career.

Q: That's a long term profit, isn't it Kal?

A: But Georgie is technically responsible for my entire career. So I have to give you that blockbuster story. I've told it to many writers, in the biggest publications in the country, Wall Street Journal, New Yorker, Profile, Time, Newsweek, whatever. And Georgie also tells the story about me and the MLK thing.

Q: But I want to find you exactly how did he launch your career?

A: What happened was he and Gilda announced they were getting married. And the marriage was big. It was a command performance for the powers, the presidents of the record industry at that time. And particular those label that were heavily in to R&B.

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Q: What labels were there at the time?

A: That would include, Atlantic Records and Chess Records out of Chicago. That would include Duke Peacock out of Houston. That would include Edward Abner, with VeeJam out of Chicago. That would include white labels such as United Artists, which had a lot of Black product. Stax barely existed yet at that time. Motown I think was coming on pretty good. Another huge one was Scepter, Florence Greenberg. They're making a movie out of her, starring Bette Midler. They were a monster. There were a number of independent labels of course.

Q: Were the indies that important in the marketplace at that time?

A: When they had hits. They had hits periodically. You had Bobby Robinson, Fire and Fury, there were a lot of them.

Q: So did you help get these presidents to the wedding?

A: Not at all. I was still a grain of sand on the beach. I knew all these people because they were highly intellectual men. And therefore they appreciated my education.

Q: Why don't you go back and explain that?

A: I met with the son of the Turkish ambassador Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler with a genius IQ, who was the God Almighty of the R&B business. Because they were relatively honest. They really paid royalties.

Q: Which was a rarity at that time?

A: They cleaned that up too with Laverne Baker. I think Ahmet was very embarrassed by that. He straightened that out. But anyway, I had been doing extensive writing in trade publication. And I would run to New York and I would meet these people. Because even though I was teaching school, I was into the business 110 percent. And at the wedding they tell an apocryphal story about a millionaire Conrad Hilton. And he was walking across the lobby, he had just built a huge hotel in Houston, the Shamrock, and he was his son Nicki, walking across the lobby and he took a sudden liking to me. So I say the analogy is, these guys saw me at the wedding, and they looked and they did a double take and they looked again and they saw that Georgie and I were really friendly, and they took a sudden liking to me. And they took me aside and said, "Kal, we want to talk with you."

Q: Who did this, Kal?

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A: It was Jerry Wexler and the late Pete Harris, who was head of promotions for Scepter. There was a lot of confusion in this Rhythm and Blues, and a tremendous lack of respect. And the trade magazines don't do that much good for us at all. And it gets discriminated against and so on. We need a thing that's organized, systematized, the kind of thing that you could do. And these guys really seemed to like you. And they trust you. So we're going to introduce you to the key guys like a Georgie Woods in every city. The guy that makes it swing for that particular city. In your writing, you'll set up your chart, the top 25 for the week, the top 40 or whatever. Just like the white records. And you'll make them give an honest count instead of hypes and bullshit, so that the list can be respected. Respected by whom? Respected first of all by the white stations. So they'll know which ones to go on that are real, that can crossover, and which ones to forget about because they're hype and they're bullshit. What was happening is they wouldn't play any of it. 'Cause they didn't know which was which. So that's what happened. I got the introductions, and I got the phones, and before very long, I ended up as the first Rhythm and Blues editor in the history of Billboard magazine. I would interview some big stars and producers. One of the key guys in the middle of all this, he'd dead, is the guy they say really founded Rock & Roll, as a manufacturer, and that was the late George Goldner, out of New York.

Q: Was that Roulette Records?

A: Well, see Morris Levy, who you know, was connected with the right people...He was a gambling degenerate. And he was in big time trouble, all the time with the IRS. He knew George pretty well.

Q: Goldner did?

A: Yeah. And see Goldner, he had "Crying in the Chapel," Dixie Cups, which were really white records. But it was very important to have George play them. So I would bring records like that into Georgie. And I'll tell you, I approached George at that time, very gingerly.

Q: What time was that?

A: I was working at the station.

Q: Around '63 or '64, right?

A: I walked on eggs with George.

Q: What do you mean you walked on eggs? You said he was a very approachable kind of person.

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A: He was, but you know if I brought him a record, I didn't know how he was going to react. I wasn't really a promotion man. I said hey it's a favor. I think it was out of respect. I think he liked that though. He likes me to this day, I must have done something right. So anyway, that's that big story. So that led to major things. Then Record World Magazine was founded, and they gave me a column, and I was a big gun in Black music. And then what happened was a sociological or cataclysmic eruption. And that was the arrival of the Beatles. And with the Beatles as a concomitant was the British invasion. And all of a sudden, all these careers, here's a 200 million dollar a year industry, suddenly wiped out. All these stars, the Four Seasons, Paul Anka, Bobby Vinton, you can go on and on. Just like Rock & Roll had wiped out Tony Bennet and Rosemarie Crony, and the Mills Brothers, and all of those people, the invasion wiped out the white American record industry. The only music indigenous to the United States that was being recorded in the United States recording studios, by United States recording artists, that could get on Top 40 radio, white radio, were the Rhythm & Blues.

Q: You say white radio, you make a clear distinction. Are you saying the white DJ's weren't playing Black pieces Kal?

A: It's all a matter of percentages. They were basically majority white oriented, toward white artists, many of whom I have named.

Q: Now of course in your case you were oriented toward both Black and white artists.

A: No, no. I was strictly Black. But once I got established in Record World, now this is another famous story. I went to the publisher. I said well I got this very famous column called "R&B Beat," and I'm real big in Black Music. And everybody says the only hits I can pick are Black hits. I got a soul ear. But I ain't worth shit on picking something white. in other words I do not have, this is quote un-quote, "a pretty little pop ear." Well, I went to the publisher and I said I'd like you to give me another column called Money Music. Alliteration here. And I want to get into Pop music.

Q: What would that have been, about '67?

A: '66. And they said, "No, no, no. You doing your thing, go away." Well I said, "Give me a chance, let me try two or three weeks. If it doesn't work we'll drop it. They said okay. And that's when I got connected with a guy named Bill Drake. He totally controlled American Pop music. He controlled the programming for the RKO general chain and controlled the following markets: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, a piece of New York, Memphis, San Diego, and San José. The king of all of them other than Georgie, is the man that is the greatest disc jockey that ever lived, white or Black. The most loved, talented,

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the most dynamic, the most entertaining was Paul "Mac Daddy" Johnson. The baddest of the bad. And he ended up the head of Black promotions for Capitol records. He died young.

Q: What made him so good Kal?

C: Number one, he had a human quality that poured through the microphone, which of course George had. If you asked me what makes George so great...George has an innate quality in his voice. There is a built in love, that he is not even conscious of. And the public doesn't think about it, but they pick up on it. And he has a natural inflection and a natural pace.

Q: Why is the pace important Kal?

C: Oh well pace because you're talking and talking and talking. And people are sitting there in their car, and you watch these girls with the fingers and the button. They give you about a second and a half and punch. I call it punch away. They don't like the record, they don't like your voice, they don't even know why. But Paul did a rhyme thing, and he did a patter that no one has been able to duplicate. I don't care if it's Jocko, I don't care if it's a rap artist, nobody could touch Paul Johnson. But he weighed 300 pounds...

Q: What city?

C: Baltimore. He was on several stations there.

Q: What role did you play in helping George with the March On Washington in '63?

C: Well as I remember, one day George called me in the studio, and he was very somber, very serious. He said, "Kal you know what's going on." I said, "Sure." So he said, "You know I don't talk to you too much about this, I keep a lot of things to myself. But the truth of the matter is if push comes to shove Black people, unfortunately, have few places to get money. Money needs to be raised for something urgent. Due to our circumstances, we don't have anywhere to go. We don't have any corporation, we don't have a piece of the American pie. It seems as if the other white groups, the Italians, Jewish, whatever, when push comes to shove, if the Jews need to do something for Israel, they'll come up with the big bucks. So they've come to me to pay for these buses. These people have to be transported to Washington and other places. And we got to have a show of support that's overwhelming. I need your help." I said, "Hey, I'm right here George. What do you have in mind? What can be done?" Well he said, "Put on your thinking cap, let's put our heads together. I got a lot of clout in this industry and I've never misused it, and I've never taken advantage of it. But I figured there would be some time when I might really need something, and

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wouldn't want to wear out my welcome with New York and L.A. It looks like that time has come. I really can't let down the people that have come to me." So we talked about it, and I said, "Let's get a little campaign. I go to New York periodically, and I'm up at the offices, so let's have a meeting with the heads of the labels, and see what they want to do about all this." So that's what happened.

Q: Who were the first ones to bite?

C: Well naturally I went to Atlantic Records first.

Q: Jerry?

C: Jerry Wexler.

Q: And how much did they commit?

C: It was more than adequate.

Q: When you say more than adequate do you mean one thousand, two thousand, what are you talking about Kal?

C: Oh yeah, sure, that's what it took. Whatever George said it was gonna take.

Q: So you mean George had that kind of clout, he could just ask for money?

C: Well, you know I wasn't no lightweight either.

Q: So the two of you together were the one two combination, huh?

C: Wasn't only one and two, one and one makes eleven. In addition to that, I'm a very strong writer. And you can sell writing. In those days of albums the big thing was liner notes. You could get any amount of money for liner notes.

Q: How much could you get at maximum?

C: Oh, if they wanted to give you \$1500 they could, or if they wanted to give you \$200. George laughed his ass off.

Q: The two of you were good for each other weren't you?

C: Sure.

Q: That's the kind of relationship you don't hear enough about in this business.

C: There was a lot of politics going on.

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Q: Well what were the politics like Kal?

C: Well here's what happened. See I have to keep talking to you because there's no way for you to do the book without the stuff I'm telling you, because nobody else knows it. It was Bob Klein who married into the family...

Q: Leon's family.

C: Leon's family. He was running the station with a very loose hand. And the jocks were running away with him. He had many problems. This one drank, this one this, this one that. They came, they went, they gave him nothing but aggravation.

Q: He had all kinds of problems, huh?

C: Well whoever was program director might have played some funny games in the men's room with somebody, and the license could be on the line, and he was shitting a brick. It was getting serious. The heat was really on. So this fella came to town named Jimmy Bishop. Jimmy, a Black fella, booming baritone voice, an IQ that didn't quit, handsome, came to town, as a weekend guy. We hit it off right away. Because we were on the same page. We talked for hours. Jimmy is still brilliant. Next thing I know, he married Louise.

Q: Louise Williams.

C: And they had a bunch of kids.

Q: The Gospel Queen.

C: Yeah. And Louise of course today is State Representative. And she's Louise Bishop. It's called TCB, taking care of business. I said, "Jimmy the heat is on, and you got a career to build. And if you can be strong..."

Q: Back to Jimmy Bishop, right?

C: He played it straight. One day I'm in the lobby of DAS, and Klein comes in, his face is almost Black.

Q: What was wrong with him?

C: The roof was falling in on him.

Q: Was that when they had the strike?

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C: No it wasn't when they had the strike. It was all that bullshit. It was too much. Every jock was a star, it was going crazy. And he had lost control.

Q: Wasn't John Bandy there at that time?

C: Not quite. Well, he wasn't in charge of them. This is before Bandy.

Q: So what happened when you saw Bob?

C: This was the period, that's the other chaos period. The first time.

Q: The second time was beyond chaos.

C: But I looked at Bob, and I said, "You know Bob I teach school all day, and you let me come in here at night, and I'm using this incredible facility, I really appreciate it. You're Jewish and I'm Jewish, and all that shit, Bob you know I know what the hell I'm doing. You know that I know who is who and what is what. You got your solution right under your nose. You got acres of diamonds right here." He grabbed me by the shoulders, and said, "All right, you and me, let's talk." He was very close then with HyLit, he ended up marrying HyLit's wife. Hylit really brought me in. And Bob being in love with HyLit's wife, he would do anything for Hylit. Bob goes like that sometimes. But anyway, he says, "What's the story?" I say, "You got a week-end guy, you treat him like shit, like he's nothing. His IQ is 25 points higher than anybody in this building." Georgie was straight, the one guy that nobody could reach. He's turned down more money in the damn men's room than most people make in 10 years. He wouldn't do it.

Q: What do you mean in the men's room? Is that literally what happened, people got money in the men's room?

C: Well where would you go?

Q: I never thought about it.

C: Allegedly. Well as you know he got into trouble with the license. And they made accusations. He had (Bob Klein) to sell and whatever...the station did get into all kinds of trouble. Which I thought was unfair because they didn't bother a lot of people.

Q: Hadn't Bob already been in trouble with the payola scam in 1958?

C: Everybody was in trouble then. You got to remember it was not illegal at that time.

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Q: What do you mean it wasn't illegal?

C: There were no laws passed at that time. I'm talking about '59.

Q: So it was okay to take money then?

C: What did they do with Dick Clark, nothing. He said I never took any money, all I took was publishing. The bottom line is, he said, "Boy are you right. Do I owe you. And he made Jimmy Bishop program director. And the important thing was, I think, Jimmy and George got along well.

Q: They were a team at that time, weren't they?

C: A team. And I said, "Look, your key gun here is Georgie. You can replace all these guys here, but you got one Georgie." Now I'm gonna tell you how Georgie picked the records on his show. Georgie was fanatic about the way he did it. He had these girls in here. And the phones went non stop, and they took the requests. By the end of the night he had so many requests I couldn't tell you. He'd tally them up, put them in rank order, the requests were there, it was played. Now that was very important to me, because in my work, I used Georgie's request number. Because picking hits is one thing, but once a record goes on you go to follow a record and trace it. Some take six weeks to become a hit, some take four, some take ten, and then you got to know when it's fading out.

Q: So you were able to track it that way. You had reliable data.

C: Did you ever discuss this with Georgie?

Q: No.

C: I used to run record hops, that's how I started making money. I would get stars, not even based on what radio station I was on, because I couldn't compete, but I got the stars anyway...

Q: How?

C: Well because of my writing, my aggressive style. They couldn't say no. It was very important to get stars to come to your record hop. That's how you made your money. If you could deliver stars to the hop at the church, you were a hero. So I saw George and he had a show at the Uptown. I forget what stars he had. And I would say, "Let me get the stars at my hop." And George would say, "You got it Kal." And this promotion man, went to pick up the star, and instead of bringing that star to my hop, brought him to Harvey Miller's hop in New Jersey. Harvey Miller was along there with Hylit at WIBG at the time.

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And I'm waiting all night like where's the star. Somewhere down the line I run into Georgie, I say, "Hey George, I don't know what happened, the star never showed up." That promotion man was never allowed to bring a record to George, to see George, or talk to George. That's how he liked to put it, for the rest to his life plus ten years. That's how George is. You cross him like that, it's the rest of your life plus ten years, out! I tell this story often for this reason, to make a point to the young people. You have to understand you are responsible for your own actions. Here's a guy who put his whole promotion career on the line to make one lousy record hop that didn't mean a damn thing to Harvey Miller. This guy burned Georgie, and he burned me.

Q: And Georgie never forgave him.

C: I'll talk to the guy, but George, no.

Q: Were you there at the station when he ran for City Council?

C: I was around, yeah. They robbed him. Boy, they stole it from him.

Q: How did that impact him? What did it do to him?

C: I think he was philosophical about it. And I think he decided to never do politics again, even though he probably could have won. He should have run again.

Q: Is it your impression that he actually had it taken from him?

C: Everyone knows he won, there's no question about it. They robbed him deaf, dumb, and blind. They were terrified of him.

Q: Was it his career as a DJ that made him so popular among white voters?

C: Absolutely.

Q: I think people now get a sense that Georgie was totally dependent on Black voters, but...

C: Absolutely not. You got to remember all these white kids grew up with him.

Q: When did it begin to change? When did white kids begin to listen more exclusively to white disc jockeys?

C: That never happened. In fact it reversed. The number one station was Power 99, and there format. In fact they busted the R&B stations of the country, by coming in with an urban, salt-n-pepper approach.

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Q: There are two Black stations on the market during that time period. You've mentioned almost exclusively your relationship with WDAS. Did you have any contact with Dolly Banks at HAT?

C: WHAT meant nothing. I knew Dolly well. I knew her husband. And everyone who used to break into the business, if they didn't go over to Camden, they went to HAT. Eventually I was offered a job by Dolly. After I had become nationally famous. She and her husband offered me to go on WWDB as a talk show host, and I turned it down.

Q: Didn't take it?

C: Well, by that time I'd made money and didn't want to be totally tied down.

Q: Was there an occasion other than the "March On Washington" when you persuaded record companies to support efforts that Georgie was involved in?

C: That was the big one. That was the one that stands out.

Q: And you got support from how many companies?

C: I remember United Artists was very good to us.

Q: And Atlantic. Who was at UA at that time that you talked to?

C: Atlantic was always number one. Anytime a DJ was out of work, they'd run to Jerry Wexler. He was the godfather. Leonard Chess was pretty good too.

Q: How was Georgie viewed by record execs Kal?

C: I think they viewed him the way they viewed E. Rodney Jones.

Q: With respect?

C: Oh tremendous.

Q: Was it a different kind of respect?

C: They knew Georgie's program was very serious to him. Georgie was always concerned about maintaining his huge audience. And not pissing it away or losing it or selling them out. I don't know if you get many people to say things like that about George.

Q: No I haven't heard very much of that.

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C: He just didn't talk a lot. I mean George was cool. George did not warm up. He did not have a lot to say. He maintained his dignity always.

Q: Did George ever talk to you about lack of educational opportunities?

C: Yeah a little bit. I think he's proud of the fact that it didn't stop him.

Q: Did he view it as a handicap in the early days.

C: No not really. I don't think he's a great writer or whatever. He knew and I knew that he had such a great natural talent on the microphone. That any lack of vocabulary or rhetorical flow, verbal expression never occurred when the mic switch turned on. And I was on his talk show a number of times. One time I was on and Mary...

Q: Kal are you writing a book?

C: No. I wanna level with you. The stuff that I know, I don't need the money, and in order for me to do it, I'd have to wreck too many people.

Q: Why would you have to wreck them Kal?

C: 'Cause that's the way it was. George will tell you, hardly nothing was straight. That's why George was in such a tough spot. And people might have thought this about George or whatever. But all George ever cared about was what he should have cared about. His audience was his life. They had given him incredible success that he could have never imagined. He came to this town with nothing and exploded. A rare opportunity and he wasn't about to lose it by doing anything dumb. He really watched his ass in that respect. He really watched his ass and he had a good time. He had a good time all the way down the line.



Leandre Jackson Photo

George addresses audience at West Philadelphia High School



Courtesy George Woods Collection

**(l-r) Former Gov. Milton Shapp, George Shapp, Mrs. Shapp, C. Delores Tucker,
Mary Mason, Al Bell**

Al Bell

(Veteran Record Executive)

Q: When and how did you first meet Georgie Woods?

A: That's a good question. I'm horrible with years. It must have been 1965, '66 or '67, somewhere in there.

Q: You had already gone to Stax at that time?

A: Yes.

Q: You were no longer at WUST?

A: I left WUST.

Q: What years were you at WUST?

A: The years before I went to Stax (laughs). I was there about a two year period. Around '63, '64.

Q: Were you at a radio station prior to that?

A: Yeah. I was in radio, that's how I really got off into this business. Prior to WUST, I was at WLOK in Memphis, Tennessee. That's how I met the people at Stax Records. It was just a little studio and production company at that time, with a little label being distributed by Atlantic. And prior to WLOK in Memphis, I was at KOKY in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Q: Why is the ministry so important?

A: Well what's important to me is letting God live through me. And inside, I suppose one of my gifts, that's the only way I can describe it today, has been the ability to speak that which I feel inside, and that which I see with my spiritual eye. To be able to articulate that. I've been able to do that. And that talent, that blessing subconsciously has caused me to want to share, but I suppose the other part of it is God moving through me. I don't know if I really know the answer to that except I know that I am continually moved with that. When I got involved with Stax, and really, really got involved, for quite some time I had a conflict in my life. And the conflict that I could not reconcile was what was characterized as secular music, and where I thought I was spiritually. For at that time I had not developed to the point that I had a clear understanding of what it was all about. Today I don't have those problems, but I did have that

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throughout my Stax experiences. Subsequent to the Stax years, by the grace of God, we've been able through the revelation of the Holy Spirit to understand now what it is really all about, and I don't have those problems any longer.

Q: During the time you were you doing it you were faced with a two road kind of thing?

A: It wasn't two roads as it was much as that internal conflict. It felt like mentally and intellectually there was a wrestling match going on between two different thoughts. And the thoughts were simply, 'am I supposed to be doing this', or 'this doesn't seem like something I should be doing'. There was a wrestling match there.

Q: Even at the height of Stax's days?

A: Oh yeah, throughout all of it.

Q: Did you intend to be a record executive initially? You went in as a PR person?

A: Yeah, but at that time I had developed my own label. I had a label, 'Suffice Records', that was distributed by Atlantic Records, just like Stax was. Eddy Floyd was on my label and a partner of mine in that label. And Eddy Floyd's first hit, 'Knock On Wood', on Stax, would have been on my label had I not merged with Stax at that time. I was already in the record business. I had been producing for Decca Records.

Q: Before Washington?

A: Oh yeah. Well what was happening...what intrigued me was while I was on radio in Philander Smith College people would drive from Houston, Texas, Chicago, Illinois, Memphis, Tennessee, New Orleans, Louisiana, Nashville, and Atlanta, Georgia all the way to Little Rock to see me. I was the top jock in town at that time. I had gotten to full time status on the station. They brought records to get me to play them. On our day time only station, at that time there was one record shop in town, and I couldn't figure this out. I said if they're spending money to do this, there must be some money in this business. So I set out to figure...somebody had to be making some money. So I set out to figure who, where and how. As I began to learn the economics of the business I began to get interested. In addition to just broadcasting music, I ought to be recording music, because broadcasting music gives me the exposure...it's the other side from where you create. I began to realize the economics, and also if I got to the other side of recording music I then could begin to put on a record that which I wanted to put on record. I had ideas back then. I just didn't know how to implement them. Before Washington, D.C., I had developed a little label...after I left Little Rock and went to Memphis I started a label called DeVoice Records.

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Q: The first label was called what?

A: That was the first. Suffice, that was after that. DeVoice was between Little Rock and Memphis. When I got to Memphis, I set up DeVoice. And when I got to Washington, D.C., I set up Suffice.

Q: Had you incorporated?

A: I incorporated and started recording artists, and releasing products all in Memphis.

Q: Was there any mentor at all anybody who talked to you about the music business?

A: I was talking to everybody. I was talking to everybody up to that point and time. The first mentor that really moved into my life in a rather profound manner, while I was still on the air and dealing with Suffice Records out of Washington, D.C., was a guy by the name of Joe Medlin.

Q: Tell me more about Joe Medlin?

A: Joe was a singer, a great balladeer. I think had it not been for Billy Eckstine, there would have been Joe Medlin. He sang like "Mr. B;" he was that kind of a singer. A real classy guy. Real knowledgeable. Had learned from the one or two guys that preceded him, the Dave Clark's and others that were in record promotion. And a song promoter went out to clubs to promote songs, but Joe worked for, when I first met him, Atlantic Records. Atlantic was distributing Suffice Records, and it was also distributing Stax Records. It was Joe Medlin who caused me to develop an even greater appreciation, from a New York vantage point, for the music that was coming out of Stax. I loved it, but I thought part of that was both the fact that I was indigenous in my environment and how I grew up. But Joe Medlin, who came out of Virginia, and who was in the New York world and who sang, for him to have an appreciation for what was coming out of Memphis, influenced my thinking, also. But he worked for Atlantic. When I first met him...I'm confused I think he was working for Decca Records, I believe. And prior to my setting up Suffice Records, it was Joe Medlin that introduced me to Milt Gabler, and Milt Gabler was the A&R director for Decca Records. Milt was the one that signed Louis Jordan to Decca Records which was ironic. And had signed Billie Holliday, and produced all the stuff on Billie Holliday. And Joe Medlin introduced Milt to me, and Milt sort of like became my A&R mentor, and my eldest sons godfather. He's a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant, brilliant man. Music man. Creator. Taught me a lot of the things that I know today about A&R. Taught me about uniqueness. Taught me about a song, and the value of a real song and allowed me to produce my first

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major recording session in Washington, D.C., with a 20 piece orchestra. And I'm not a musician. I really can't sing, and my rhythm is horrible. My timing is ridiculous; I can't dance. I can't do any of that kind of stuff. But Milt allowed me to produce my first session which was released on Decca Records with an artist Grover Mitchell, 'I'm Tired of Crying Midnight Tears', which I co-wrote with Eddy Floyd at that time. But I was introduced to Milt by Joe Medlin. There enters Joe in my life. And Joe became sort of like the mentor, if you will, teaching me the record business, while I continued to work in radio, as well as build my own little label. When I left and joined Stax, he took me on the road. The first time around the country.

Q: What did going on the road mean? Where were you going to?

A: Well, we went from city to city. We'd check into a hotel, not like this, during those times you couldn't come near a hotel like this. You'd check in the colored hotels.

Q: Even though you was with a big label.

A: Yeah, that didn't have nothing to do with it back then. How old are you?

Q: I don't know.

A: That didn't have nothing to do with it back then. You have to go back into that period of time. This period of time is before 1968. This was when they were calling them Jim Crow. Jim Crow was alive and well.

Q: Was your schedule pre-planned?

A: Yeah, very well organized. From the hotel to the record store, to make the record store aware of the product. See if the product was selling. From record store to radio station. From radio station back to record store. And then to your distributor. Or sometimes to the distributor, then to the record store, then to the radio station, then back to the record store, then back to the distributor, and then out of town.

Q: Within a days time?

A: No, no it depended on the city. But it was that kind of a routine. It just depended. When you came to Philadelphia...well generally I'd leave...for an example I'd leave Memphis and come to New York. I'd work New York, Philadelphia, Washington-Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, into Memphis. That would be a leg. I got to the point where I would do that sometimes in 10 days. That's moving. Cause I was a staff of one, you see. You had to do it. You slept on planes.

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Q: So that's probably when you got to meet George for the first time?

A: Yes.

Q: So that's before Stax?

A: No, no, that period I was just talking about was when I first went to Stax. When I left WUST and went to Stax.

Q: Were you a member of NATRA at that time period?

A: Yeah, I was a member of NATRA because of my involvement in radio.

Q: So you may have met him at NATRA?

A: Oh yeah, I met him...oh I knew him. I knew him long before coming to Phiilly, but I didn't know him intimately. I knew who he was. He knew who I was. We all knew each other, because there was just a handful of us around the country and all of us were good.

Q: When you say handful about how many were there nationwide?

A: I don't know.

Q: 60 or 70?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you met annually?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you discuss there?

A: There were workshops. The same kind of thing, I don't know whether you've been to the other conferences other than the IAAMM? Which ones have you been to?

Q: New Music Seminar.

A: Not quite like New Music, but somewhat like New Music in a sense. Have you ever been to Impact? Well, a cross between Impact and New Music Seminar. Our emphasis at that point and time was trying to upgrade the quality of our broadcasting skills, and to upgrade our programming. To learn how to

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position ourselves to generate more revenue, and to get accepted by the advertisers much more readily. So that we would be able to get more than just Royal Palm Men's Pomade, Sweet Garret's Snuff and Tiger 186 and Thunderbird Wine. We were looking for the American Airlines, if you will. Back then we talked about the ways and means to do that. We also were looking for increasing and improving our salary and things like that, 'cause we were not getting paid.

Q: That was uniformed? Most stations were white owned?

A: Yes.

Q: Even when they were black owned...

A: No, no, no, no, even when they were black owned, there wasn't much of a salary.

Q: WERD in Atlanta?

A: Yeah, WERD in Atlanta and maybe the one in Kansas City, and Dr. Bell in Detroit.

Q: Were those disc jockey's complaining the same way as the guys at predominantly white owned stations? Were they being paid about the same as you guys were?

A: If you were in Detroit you might make a little more than I made in Little Rock, and a little more than I made in Memphis. And I made more in Washington, D.C., than I made in Memphis and Little Rock, but nothing near what my white counterpart was making.

Q: So the issue of equity?

A: The issue was equity, which was our argument back then. That was the argument in NATRA, and that was the argument in the quest amongst us as a people. After the 1954 Supreme Court decision, Brown vs. The Board of Education, we had the 1957 school integration crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas' Central High School. We were not talking about integration we were talking about equality. For our schools were excellent, we had excellent schools. I mean our schools looked like college campuses. They made the schools today look like a joke.

Q: In Arkansas?

A: Yeah, but really black schools across America. The problem was that we had the 'hand me down' books and other things. Our schools were not up to standard

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or up to par with the white schools. So we were asking for equality. We were not getting from the Board of Education the same allocation of funds for our music departments and what have you. We were looking for equality. We were not looking for integration. And we got put in a trick, for we were told, and most African Americans probably don't realize this, by the media that Negroes seek to integrate. And we then started talking about integrating. And as we began to integrate we began at that point and time, 1957, to eliminate the development of our economic base as an ethnic group in America. When we started to integrate. Dr. King was the catalyst that carried that forward. In 1959, I was with Dr. King at the SCLC workshops in Georgia. I was a student there. Before Jesse, and Andy and all of them. That's when the freedom song was a chant. It wasn't 'We Shall Overcome'. It was 'Don't Listen to Mr. Charlie, don't listen to his lies, 'cause black folks, we ain't got a chance unless we organize.' That was the freedom song. And then we'd walk out singing, 'I Ain't Going To Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round'. That's what it was about.

Q: So you saw it changing? You watched this transformation begin to occur?

A: Oh yeah. And disagreed.

Q: How did you express your disagreement?

A: I disagreed with Dr. King.

Q: Did you verbalize it?

A: Oh yeah. I told him that I thought that as an ethnic group we had to be like every other ethnic group in America, that we had to build our own economic base. If we'd build our own economic base, then we could elect our own politicians. We could continue to perpetuate our own educational system, as well as our culture. We could impact and influence the legislation that would give us the Civil Rights that we needed if we had our own law makers. Because my position at that point and time was that in America, every ethnic group built it's own economic base, and then it mainstreamed itself as a result of economic power. Because this is a capitalistic society with a capitalistic form of government. Dr. King's position was obviously the one coming out of the Ghandi philosophy of passive resistance, which I couldn't argue with. Then he talked to me about the position of turning the other cheek. Theologically, I could not argue with that. We had a march in Savannah, Georgia, one day and I broke rank, 'cause I carried a switch blade knife at that time. That night, Doc sat alone with me, and this is when I left. Doc sat alone with me, and he and I talked about the philosophical differences. And he said to me, 'Alvertus, I can not argue with you about what you're talking about, you're right. But what I'm doing must be done first. For the whole world must recognize first, that we exist in America as a people, and then they must see how we are being treated as a

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people. Then you can go on and do what you're talking about doing.'

Q: So it was a tactic for him?

A: I'm just telling you what he said.

Q: Did you counter argue?

A: No, no I agreed with him. In retrospect I don't know whether as we speak today that I would agree as wholeheartedly, because I think even though we realize as a result we got a lot of equality...equality, evolvment, we lost in other areas. For we did not continue to build and develop our own economic base. So at that time we were building and developing our own insurance companies, our own banks, our own hotels, our own restaurants, just like every other ethnic group in America had done. But from '57 forward we ceased to do that. And from that point forward we ceased to become the kind of entrepreneurs that we were, and we started turning into laborers more and more.

Q: You feel in retrospect that might have been an area...

A: I don't want to...you know they say hindsight is 20-20. I don't want to really delve off into it that much. Suffice it to say I wish we could have achieved both.

Q: Could both have been pursued?

A: I left Dr. King and went to WLOK in Memphis, Tennessee. Which is a break between...I had left Atlanta, Georgia, left KOKY to go with Dr. King. I left and went back to WLOK in Memphis, Tennessee. Now I'm going to jump ahead. When you look back at Stax Records, you are appreciating a manifestation of what I was talking to him about. For we took Stax...it was inside me, I didn't preach it to the people internally, I just did it. We took the revenue generated from the sale of our records, maintained a good bottom line in the company, it was a profitable company, and we continued to invest back into the community. We invested into business persons that were trying to get businesses established, that needed loans, that couldn't get them at banks. We loaned them the money. In the music industry, outside of the music industry. We were the first company to advertise in *Jet* magazine. I mean the industry didn't pay any attention...I mean they didn't know it existed. We spent a significant amount of monies with *Jet* magazine, and in *Ebony* magazine advertising at that time. We advertised in our black newspapers across America. So as to get that money flowing back into the community. We did business with black businesses across America. We aided in underwriting every black organization out there, whether it was SNCC, whether it was C.O.R.E., whether it was SCLC. We helped underwrite Operation Breadbasket, we helped name, underwrite and establish P.U.S.H., etc., etc., etc. We helped to underwrite the first black expo

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there in Chicago. We were just involved in everything that was going on in African American life and lifestyle. We helped underwrite political campaigns. We helped underwrite Hatcher in Gary, Indiana, Stokes in Cleveland, all of those. We were involved in all of those campaigns down to local judges in cities and things like that. And were helping develop strategies.

Q: So you were not only giving donations you were also having planning sessions?

A: No question about it. And had an organization qualified to do it. I mean we were Stax Records, but we were called the Stax Organization. For we marketed, manufactured and recorded music, where we marketed everything else we wanted to market. We had qualified people in every area. We had people that were qualified to put together political campaigns in our communications department. We had a communications department that housed publicity, public relations, advertising, political consultation and all of that.

Q: Who developed that? Was it in place when you came in?

A: Oh no. When I went to Stax there were two offices, one for Jim Stewart and one for his sister. Two telephones. And just the musicians in the studio. It was just a little label that was distributed by Atlantic. It was a little production company. That's all it was. And it was losing money and about to go under. And we developed it from that into the large company...

Q: What were the first steps you took when you first went in there?

A: Well Jim Stewart called me and told me he was having problems. Well first of all, I was a jock in Washington. And I was playing their records and I would get their records over to Fat Daddy, who was in Baltimore. And Fat Daddy would play the product in Baltimore. Prior to my coming to Washington, Stax music was not played in Washington D.C.

Q: So you brought them to distribution?

A: Oh yeah. I brought it on this side of the Mason-Dixon line. It was confined to the South, and specifically the mid-South. Jim Stewart would call me and play recordings on the phone or he'd send me a tape. I'd advise him on what to release.

Q: Were you consulting in a formal or informal way?

A: Informal.

Q: You weren't getting paid?

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A: No, no, no. It was just the relationship. So finally he called me one day and said, "look I'm having problems with the company, and I'm not getting the promotion that I need out of Atlantic Records, and I wonder, because of your stature in radio, if you'd consider coming to Memphis and heading up the Promotions Department for the company, and taking over the promotion activity and building us in that area. If you do that and help us turn it around then you merge your company and we'll give you a piece of the company."

Q: That was the offer from the very beginning?

A: And I went from what I was making in Washington, D.C., at that time, which was substantial in terms of what I was getting paid in radio, I was booking into the Howard Theatre, just like Georgie was doing here, and I was doing my record hops and things around town, the same way Georgie was doing. I left and went there for \$200 hundred dollars a week gross pay. Jim gave me a hundred, and Jerry Wexler at Atlantic Records gave me a hundred. We built it, turned it around real quick. And I think in around 9 months I had taken it from a company that was losing to a company that was profiting.

Q: Were you turning it around by simple management changes or new investment? how'd you do it?

A: All I did was go to the studio and start playing the tapes, started saying let's release this. Let's release that. Now why don't y'all go back and do this. Hey man you need to write a song like this, getting involved creatively. And then on the phone talking to radio about playing it. Sitting up all night long writing letters, because we couldn't afford to stay on the phone that much. Hand writing letters to jocks around the country.

Q: What would you say to them in the letter?

A: I'd talk to them about the product and how they ought to be programming it and why they ought to be programming it. And what the product was about and the kind of contribution it would make to their audience.

Q: Gave them more rationale for doing it?

A: Yes.

Q: And that began to turn the results?

A: Yes.

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Q: Was there any particular artist that began to break it real big first?

A: There was Carla Thomas and Otis Redding. Sam and Dave became the real kicker for us, and then of course...actually the ones that started breaking real big was the Madlads here, 'cause Georgie was breaking the Madlads for us. And we were spreading it as a result of Georgie Woods. Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, Carla Thomas and Rufus Thomas, those were the stable at that time. Then we had William Bell developing in there, cause he had already had one hit before I had got to the company. You don't miss your water till the well runs dry. He had gone away and was in the service for a while, but he came back and he immediately fell right in line...Getting hit records on all of them, so I started working with the writers, and talking more and more to the producers about my concept of what a hit record ought to be.

Q: Now this is all prior to Staples', 'I'll Take You There'?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were not a songwriter at the time at all?

A: Yeah, I was a songwriter before I went there. I was writing songs back during the time when I was at WUST.

Q: Were they being recorded by artists?

A: Yeah, Eddy Floyd, and the song I did for Decca and Grover Mitchell. As a matter of fact I started doing my first real writing in Washington, D.C., with Eddy Floyd. He was my greatest influence as a songwriter.

Q: How did Eddy influence you?

A: I appreciated his melodies, and we were very compatible. We could sit and talk like you and I are talking now, and an idea would come and we could just sit and work that idea into a song. And I liked the way he sang a song.

Q: So you were writing for that particular singer?

A: Well yeah we would write for the particular singer. It was always tailor made. But there would be sometimes when an idea would just come. The A&R is Artist and Repertoire. Repertoire is of course the song. And that's finding that unique song that fits that unique artist. That's what it's really all about. So some of the songs just come and you marry them to the appropriate artist, and then there are instances when you write for a specific artist.

Q: Today, how many have you composed?

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A: 40, 50, 60.

Q: Which artists?

A: They've been recorded from everybody from Carla Thomas to Otis Redding, Sam and Dave to Booker T and the MG's, to practically all of the artists there at Stax at that time. And subsequent to that, the rappers of today, Black Pro, the big rock act, Bruce Springsteen, BeBe and CeCe Winans, of course recently by rock artists, all kinds of artists. Nina Simone, I think she changed 'I Ain't Never Found A Girl' to 'I Ain't Never Found A Man'. I think she did 'I Ain't Never Found A Man That Love Me Like You Do'. I think that was the song. It was one, I've forgotten now.

Q: The vocalist's performance would be the impetus for what you were writing?

A: Sometimes.

Q: When it wasn't that way, how did you write?

A: It just came.

Q: Did you play piano or anything?

A: Oh no.

Q: So you were composing with what? A pen and pad?

A: Yeah. Or what would happen in many instances I'd come up with ideas and start writing 'the poems', and playing around with melodies 'cause I'm not a good singer, and get with Eddy cause he always had the melody, and then we would either get with Steve Cropper or with Booker, who was a musician, because Eddy wasn't a musician either. We'd get with a musician and sometimes it would be Steve Cropper, sometimes it would be Booker T, of Booker T and the MG's, and start fooling around with the melodies, and adding the chord changes and refining it.

Q: So you hadn't really built a staple of songwriter's at Stax at that time period?

A: No, we were building.

Q: Was that your intent in the beginning?

A: I guess I can say I saw the need, but at the time I didn't think about it like that. I just did what was natural. And instinctively, we needed songs. And we needed

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to write better songs. We needed to write hits.

Q: So did you find a better time of day in which you were writing?

A: It may have been, as I think about it, during my Stax years most of my writing was done at night. After normal work hours and on the weekends. Before Stax, I was writing mornings and mid-day. I was writing between my shifts on the radio, and then going to do the record hops and things. I did morning and afternoon drive in radio, I'd do 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., come in and write, go back and do 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and then go back and write or either go to a record company. I was doing morning and afternoon drive. I did that throughout my career in radio.

Q: All your career you had long hours. You were accustomed to long hours?

A: That's all I know.

Q: When you traveled around the country with Stax you knew the dj's already...that's sort of an unusual position, you had a rare combination didn't you?

A: That's what Jim Stewart found attractive about it, because the jocks respected me. They would respond to my letters. You got to go back in time. We had telephones, but we couldn't afford to be on the telephone then like today. It was a different era. I mean today we take a lot of these things for granted. You couldn't afford to be on the telephone that much. And sometimes you'd catch a bus and go to the next city.

Q: You mentioned the other day a particular record that hadn't sold well nationwide but George had broke it in Philly, what was it?

A: It was the Astors, and the record was titled 'Candy'. And we sold 50-60 thousand records in Philadelphia alone.

Q: How do you track sales that way? Distributors ordering large quantities?

A: Yeah, yeah. There were two distributors at Stax that would have been Marnell. I think the Astors were on Stax. Stax was in one distributor in town, and Volt, which was the label that Otis Redding was on was in another distributor.

Q: Wasn't Stax one recording company?

A: Yeah, but we had different labels.

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Q: Who was the parent company?

A: The parent was Stax. They were all subsidiaries. But there were different labels, because we had a large roster. And as we build a roster we spread it out on labels so you wouldn't look at a jocks play list and see 13 Stax Records up there. Generally, we had 14 records being played at the same time.

Q: How about on the Bill Board charts?

A: No, at that point and time we were fortunate if we got 1 on the charts, and even more fortunate...

Q: As popular as the records were they weren't making the charts?

A: You got to appreciate that this was a time before we even had an R&B black chart to amount to anything. And what we had was one chart at that point and time. There was no R&B chart or black chart or soul chart and all of that. It wasn't even appreciated as being a valid art form.

Q: Regardless of the number of units being sold?

A: No, because what was happening, black artists would go and record a piece of product, and it started getting popular and a white artists would come and cover it. Remember this was segregation. For you to appreciate Georgie Woods you have to, in your mind, go back to the times as much as humanly possible, the time that he lived in, and then you'll realize how much of a giant he was and is. You have to realize the time that when he stood as he stood up for things and issues, that it was not popular or fashionable, and dangerous to do that. You have to realize the time. If you don't put it in context of time you're losing it. You'll lose it. There are some jewels in what we're talking about and what you're dealing with, in dealing with Georgie Woods, but you gotta go back to that period in time as much as is possible. And I would encourage you that as you talk around talk to some of the older people and find out just what was going on in society at that time. Then you could understand the impact of some of the things that were being done. When I first got in the business they told me that when you sold 30,000 records, 30,000 albums on a black artist that you had saturated the sales potential, and when you sold 300,000 singles you had saturated the sales potential. But we quickly disproved that at Stax. For we quickly got to the point where we were selling 300,000 albums, and before they could turn around good we were doing a half million and a million. On the Isaac Hayes' and all that kind of stuff. Which just blew their minds as far as the industry was concerned, because that had not been done before. That was not supposed to be possible. So our music they didn't pay it any attention; we'd sell 300,000 albums and we wouldn't get past the top 50 on the Hot 100 charts at that time.

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Q: How were you selling it then, did you have large advertising budgets?

A: Before there was radio, the way you sold a record was you took your record and you went into the record store, and you got the record store to play it. As the people came in they heard it. They liked it, and they bought it. And when they went home and played it a neighbor heard it, or they liked it and they talked about it because it was unique. It was a unique singer, it was a unique song, so word of mouth caused that product to sell. It was word of mouth advertising. Radio came along, and all radio did was become a glorified record shop. Where you could expose that piece of product to more people at the same time. Which accelerated the sales, and accelerated the word of mouth, but it's still the word of mouth that sells the records. Charts had nothing to do with it. Charts hurt us to a certain extent. For charts gave rise to a programming policy, because of alleged payola and all of that kind of stuff, that said to a programmer you program what's on the national charts. If it's not on a certain position on the charts you don't program it. To a retailer, chain stores, in order to control buying and manage buying we'd buy it after it gets to a certain point on the national chart, which is not necessarily an accurate reflection of what goes on in the local community. For you can have a record happening in a community that's not on the charts. Radio stations back then called the record stores to see what was selling in the record stores. And that's what they played. Radio stations back then went to the clubs to see what was being played on the juke boxes, and that's what they played. Radio station jocks back then would do their record hops, and whatever people reacted to at the record hops and everything that's what they played. So we were giving the people what they wanted. We were dealing with the people. But we've gotten to a point now where it's science and technology and we've forgotten about humanity and the human side of it. Just like everything else in our country today, where I think broadcasting politics, corporate America, and everything else is out of touch with the people. It's over here someplace, and humanity, the people are someplace else. Out of touch. I think our industry is suffering, the recorded music side and the broadcast music side as a result of that, because we're out of touch. Our nation is suffering because our leaders are out of touch. So it wasn't about that, it was about recording great records. There's an old cliché if you will, it says 'water seeks its own level'. Well they used to say in the industry 'you can't stop a hit record'. If you put it in the grooves, and it was a hit, unique piece of product, somehow some way if you got it manufactured and got it out there, somehow someway, that record eventually would sell and become a hit.

Q: So essentially the masses of people themselves determine the success of the artists?

A: Exactly.

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Q: Did you find your distribution deals were a deterrent to growth? Atlantic Records was still distributing it right?

A: Not that long, Atlantic distributed Stax until 1968. Then in 1968 Atlantic sold to I believe the Kenney Corporation, which became part of the Warner Group, and out of that grew WEA, Warner, Elektra, Atlantic. That's how WEA came about. And there was a clause in Stax's contract that says should Atlantic choose to do something like that, that Stax had the option to go along with that or go its separate way. We opted at that time to go our separate way.

Q: What happened next?

A: Well what we did was we sold the company. It was just a production company, we had staff to do more at that time on the promotions side. We were able to sell it to Gulf and Western Industries, through Paramount Pictures and their famous music division. And became a subsidiary, and got it fused into the company. The capital that we needed to staff up. We staffed up and then we were into the same distributors that Atlantic had been into. On our own.

Q: So you cut the middle person out?

A: Instead of being distributed by Atlantic we distributed ourself.

Q: Which might mean 30-40%?

A: Oh a lot more than that. We were getting a 12% royalty from Atlantic.

Q: So 78%...so you reversed it?

A: Yes, we became a free standing independent record company.

Q: Is that why you then became more of a target?

A: We became a target because Motown and Stax set out to raise excellence for black performing artists to levels, as far as the recording artists were concerned, that had not been realized before. We were able to do it consistently. We spent the dollars required, because we desired greatness. We spent the dollars required, which reduced our margin of profit, to cause...just like it was being spent on the white artist. We spent the dollars in advertising, we spent the dollars in publicity, we spent the dollars in artist development. It had not been done before. As a result sales increased. As a result the market expanded. As a result we broke through that barrier of just being kept under the counter. **Berry**, in part broke through because he became cosmopolitan with his approach. He took soul and refined it. We were gutsy and rural, and diverse. I'd like to think that between Motown and Stax we covered a full 360° of the

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African American musical experience. For at Stax we had from jazz to blues to gospel to R&B to the Madlads and Astors which were a Motown type artist. You name it we had it all. We did some of all of it there. Our mind was to capture it as it was. To get the very essence of it like a work of art and Berry was the artist. We took it to new heights. At Atlantic records they set out to do the same thing for they had been influenced by Stax, and Ahmet and Jerry and Nehusi, National Association of Record Manufacturers [at the time headed Jules Malamud currently Impact] were the three guys who were in there, and the engineering and producing people saw greatness in black music and really spent the dollars in promoting it. And got out and worked. That was studied by Harvard University. I made a speech once at the NARM convention, and I told them Black is beautiful...business. Scared them to death, because it was the first time they had a black speaker come to speak to NARM. And back during this time, you have to remember we had Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, so I came in this white organization, keynoting it. So what are you going to speak about? Well Black is beautiful. What? Business. They only knew that when the room was filled with people.

Q: Where was it held in New York?

A: No, Miami. Prior to that I was going into Chicago and experimenting with Sears. We we did a thing called Stax sound in Chi-town, where I hired beautiful girls with bandannas on them and had them all in Sears stores, and got Sears to put all of my album products in, advertised on radio, advertised on television, to prove that album product would sell in volume. And took those statistics to that convention to show them. Cause at that time our product was still being placed under the counter, in the back, in the corner somewhere. After that of course Harvard...I'm responding to your question is that why I became a target. After that, Harvard was commissioned by CBS Records to study soul music. And Harvard in essence told them that they had to get into...

Q: Where is that recorded?

A: It's called the *Harvard Study on Soul Music*. It's floating out here now, a lot of people have copies of them. I have a copy someplace. Gamble may have a copy or may know where one is. The brother that wrote the book, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, Nelson has a copy or has access. That's your best resource.

Q: What is the essence of the report?

A: It was a study on Stax and Motown and Atlantic. And it broke that soul music power, and it showed that those were the three companies that were dominating, and that this soul music, this black music was going to become the dominant music. It told CBS that if they were going to remain a viable company, they had

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to get involved in this music. Which they had not really gotten involved in before. And it showed them how we were relating to the community. How to set up a department, how they had to relate to civil rights organizations and all of this type of stuff. All of that stuff.

Q: So you developed the model, the national model?

A: And what you really see happening now in the black music departments in every major record company in America is really a facsimile of what was going on in Stax Records. And many of the people that worked and work in those departments were employees of Stax.

Q: So there's a direct relationship between the black music divisions of these record companies now and what blacks themselves had developed initially?

A: No question about it.

Q: That connection is not normally made?

A: Well no, it's not intended to be normally made. Why would they?

Q: Now in doing the report they came to you and interviewed you?

A: No.

Q: So how did they do it?

A: I only found out about it and the only reason the report got out is because at one point and time I was distributing my product through CBS's branches. And I realized they were putting me out of business.

Q: How did you find out?

A: Well that's a long story and I ain't got the time. I'll fill the blanks in later. But I filed a \$67 million anti-trust suit against them. And through discovery and requests for production of documents and things like that this Harvard report slipped through the crack. And that's when I found out what had happened. I didn't know what was going on. I know they were killing me.

Q: What was your reaction when you found out?

A: It blew my mind.

Q: How did you deal with it? Did you call Berry on the phone?

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A: Oh no, no, no. I was in the middle of a fight. That's a long, long, long, long, long story.

Q: Psychologically, how did you deal with it? Spiritually, how did you deal with it?

A: Prayer. That's the only thing that brought me through all of that. Sometimes we'll talk about that. That's all.

Q: No consultant?

A: No, no, no, no, but one, but one. But there was a consultant, a friend of mine that was an attorney who was aware of it, that it was being done, and who talked to me about it. So there was a black attorney that talked to me about it, and I would go back and forth with that, but it was really God, and nothing but God. Fortunately my values were not trapped up in material things. I fought them. I was militant. I came out of the Civil Rights Era before 'We Shall Overcome'.

Q: That doesn't come out strong enough in Nelson George's book.

A: Well I know. He didn't have all that information.

Q: What's the relationship between what got into the record on that and what you know to be the truth?

A: I grew to appreciate that in many instances today with certainly enormous advancements educationally and all kinds of experiences in the corporate world, in terms of a real knowledge, in terms of what is really, really going on, we are still just a few steps from slavery. In terms of the majority. That's general, but there are select people that know. Like the rest of the American people don't really know what's going on. And the few that know live longer lives, 'cause who do you talk to?

Q: Do you regret having filed an anti-trust suit?

A: No. Because it would have been selling my people...if I hadn't filed the suit and gone along with a compromise that was offered to me it would have been selling my people. And I couldn't do that. The other thing is if I hadn't filed the anti-trust suit I would not know what I know today, and all the other experiences, but the discovery...I went up against C.B.S., Dick Gregory, who is a good friend of mine said, 'man do you know who you are going up against?' He caught a plane and flew to Memphis and said, 'are you crazy?' So we took a walk. He said, 'I want you to explain to me as we walk out here in this open who you're going up against so I'll know you know.' And as I explained it to him as we

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walked out in the open, he said 'okay you know, brother I'm just going to pray for you then.' But the education is priceless. God blessed me to go through that experience and many others and still be a young man and able to do something with it and about it in a quiet prayerful way every day.

Q: You and Georgie have a very similar philosophy. 'Cause I would ask them why didn't the audience know, he said that's not the way you do it. Do it in a quiet way and keep moving. Don't stop doing what you're doing, but just be persistent in doing it. That explains why he said you got to talk to Al Bell then. He was aware of the whole thing you went through right?

A: Oh yeah, in part. He didn't know all of the details. We never got a chance after the experience for me to come back and share with him what was going on. He saw it from the outside, and being the sensitive person that he is, and the kind of person that receives things, I'm sure he knew *spiritually what was happening*.

A: I lived it. I know it. At some point in my life maybe I'll sit down and read it, I don't even collect them.

Q: Once the discovery occurred did you actually go to court?

A: No, we settled under duress. I had got engaged in a real war cause they came at me from all directions. They started describing me as a black nationalist, for we had put on prior to this that Rock Stax concert in Los Angeles where we put 112,000 people in that stadium out there. Scared them to death. And we financed it ourselves. We filmed it and did all of that ourselves. Prior to that we had been working with Melvin Van Peebles, and aiding Melvin in getting his properties out, 'Sweet Sweetback's Bad Ass Song' and all that. You look at that, and our involvement with black politicians, what have you, the agents of government became real concerned about that. I didn't know how concerned until I went and got, under the freedom of information, some of it. It blew my mind as to how I was being characterized, and what was being said about me.

Q: Were there any friends or associates during that whole period who were close to you who could see what you were going through and could sense what was going on?

A: There was some people...well not see or sense what I was going through, no, cause that was really above our heads. And above most people's heads.

Q: It was done quietly wasn't it?

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A: Except the campaign that was designed to destroy my credibility. It was an organized sophisticated campaign.

Q: You think it was organized?

A: Oh no, not think, I know. This was truly character assassination. I mean literal character assassination. I was told by my attorneys that my life was over. And my attorney was James F. Neal, who was the special Watergate prosecutor under Jaworski, that prosecuted Hareiman, Ehrlichman and Witzell, and a dear friend of mine. After he defended me on a 19 count indictment that had been brought against me in Memphis, Tennessee, he said my life was over.

Q: You went to the prayer motion then?

A: Oh yeah, before then. Before it went to trial. The only difference between me and Doc, was they assassinated Doc and killed him physically, and they assassinated and killed me otherwise, or attempted to kill me otherwise. But God resurrected us. I see...I don't know where this will lead, but we need to talk more. Now is not the time to do it, 'cause I'm now skating across some things that, that... Yeah I think it's by Random House. The other one is called 'Sweet Soul Music', by Peter Garelnick. He wrote a book and never talked to me one time.

Q: Were you considered personae non grata?

A: I don't think so. We live in a racist society.

Q: But you can still smile?

A: Why sure. I used to hear old folks say ignorance is bliss, I think it's a nuisance.

Q: What about colleagues, dj's or whatever, record executives, black ones particularly. How did they respond to this?

A: Brother go back again to that point and time, if there's a lynching going on what you gonna do? You better get out the way to keep from getting lynched yourself.

Q: *Jet*, *Ebony* magazine did they interview you at all? You knew those people?

A: Sure I knew them. No. That's understandable. I learned a long time ago that freedom is a state of mind and not a state of being, that's one. We're still a long way from economic freedom as an ethnic group in America today. And because we don't have economic freedom and we're dependent by and large wholly and totally on the larger segment of society for our very existence, it makes it

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difficult to do some things that we might like to do, or know we ought to do. For fear or concern it might make a wave some place and create a direct problem for you that could have a direct adverse impact on you economically. Just to let you see, and it's understandable. I don't doubt for one moment that there weren't a lot of black people that pained for me, that cried for me, I know there were a lot that prayed for me, but they couldn't do anything else but that.

Q: Black lawyers and stuff?

A: There were one or two that were there, one by the name of Frederick Patman was there and stood by me, and is one of my best friends today, a black lawyer. And there were others, but I mean our black lawyers have not been exposed to all of this.

Q: How about Jesse and those guys like that?

A: Jesse did as much as he could. Well we're still two steps from slavery.

Q: Even with all of the progress that we've made over the years we're still about two steps away.

A: Yeah, and as we, are so is this nation becoming. You hear what I said? I'm going to say that again. As we are, maybe it's better stated, so has this nation become. And one day, we're going to wake up as a multicultural nation and realize it. My wife accuses me of being an eternal optimist. I'm not. I'm terribly realistic, but I believe in all powerful God, who has all knowledge, all intellect, all power and is everywhere. Omniscient, omnipresent, etc. All of the omni's. It is my belief and judgement that as we sit today, that as a people we still have the opportunity to rise to our true leadership position. Leadership culturally, leadership socially, leadership morally, leadership economically, if we would but connect spiritually. And the overriding leadership would be spiritual. Everything physical is a manifestation of something spiritual. And there are only two spirits. When you trace, and nobody denies this now, the evolution of mankind we trace its beginning or genesis to the continent of Africa. Nobody denies the Garden of Eden and its origins. And nobody questions that anymore. It is not being promoted, but it's not being debated. We, if we change our minds, if we change our way of thinking we will become free, at last, and can rise to the occasion that we have dreamed about and envisioned since we were first brought to these shores. I hope I didn't lose you there. But it's left up to us as a people. And that's not optimism, I believe that to be harsh reality. I say that we're two steps from slavery, but we're just one step away from all power. So I talk about all of these things that have happened, and they will continue to happen unless and until.

Q: So the key element is what we ourselves are able to do and lack of fear of

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moving towards it?

A: Exactly. You hear people say seeing is believing. I don't. Believing is seeing. Seeing is not believing. If you believe it you'll see it. And we are what we think we are. What you sow is what you reap, what you put in is what you get out. They even say on the computer now, garbage in, garbage out. Misinformation in, misinformation out. Believing is seeing. Change your thoughts will change your destiny. That's how simple...that's the one step. All we need to do is really reverse all this stuff out here. Spiritually and otherwise, 'cause that's where the perverted thinking is coming from. So just reverse it. And that's that one step. And we're free.



Leandre Jackson

Georgie Woods' Awards and Certificates

MUSIC INDUSTRY AND RADIO AWARDS

- 1991 ANNETTE & CO.
"For his many contributions to the Radio & Music Industry as well as his tireless efforts in the BLACK COMMUNITY"
- 1988 NAACP FREEDOM FUND AWARD TO GEORGIE WOODS,
PRESIDENT & FOUNDER OF U.B.B.A.
WDAS RADIO Personality
"In recognition of outstanding performance and service to the community "
• West Branch NAACP
Milton J. G. Montgomery, President
- 1987 NITE SCENE PUBLICATIONS, Sonny Perry, Fletcher Lone.
Georgie Woods: Mr. U.B.B.A.
"We want you in our neighborhood because you're SO STRONG"

United States Air Force Recruiting Service
Certificate of Appreciation

"In recognition of outstanding support of the United States Air Force Recruiting Service and dedication to the ideals and principles of the U.S. of A."

• Joseph Mazziotta, Major, USAF

FROM THE WDAS FAMILY TO THE WDAS
ALUMNI

Alumni Day

"Thank you for the memories"

- 1983 Monty & Betty Walls Superior Plaque and Trophy Co.
To: Georgie Woods, Philadelphia's #1 DJ
"With sincere appreciation for the Concern and thoughtfulness you have shown toward us and your listening audience on WDAS "
- 1980 Philadelphia Chapter of the National Business League
* Communications Award
- 1978 Bright Hope Baptist Church
-Outstanding Communication of the Community

GEORGIELOGUE

- 1971 Philadelphia Records Promotion Men
"Salutes Georgie Woods who has taken that one big step for a man and one giant leap for his community, Right ON! "

NATRA, 1971

"Best Air Personality -Major Market "

RCA/YDC STAFF AND STUDENTS

"Dear Mr. Georgie Woods: If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life he will soon find himself left alone. Your friendship is essential to our souls."

- 1966 BLACK MUSIC ASSOCIATION
- Service to Young Award
- 1965 Philadelphia Continentals Inc.
- Award of Merit. Outstanding Communication

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

- 1992 S. Weir Mitchell Elementary School
"Our very own ambassador of love and constant encouragement."
- 1990 PAN AFRICAN STUDIES, COMMUNITY EDUCATION
PROGRAM AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT,
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY (Roots Night)
"For a life of service to the community "
- 1989 RUTH HARPER'S MODELING AND CHARM SCHOOL
"For outstanding community service in the Philadelphia
community "

NORTH CENTRAL BASKETBALL LEAGUE

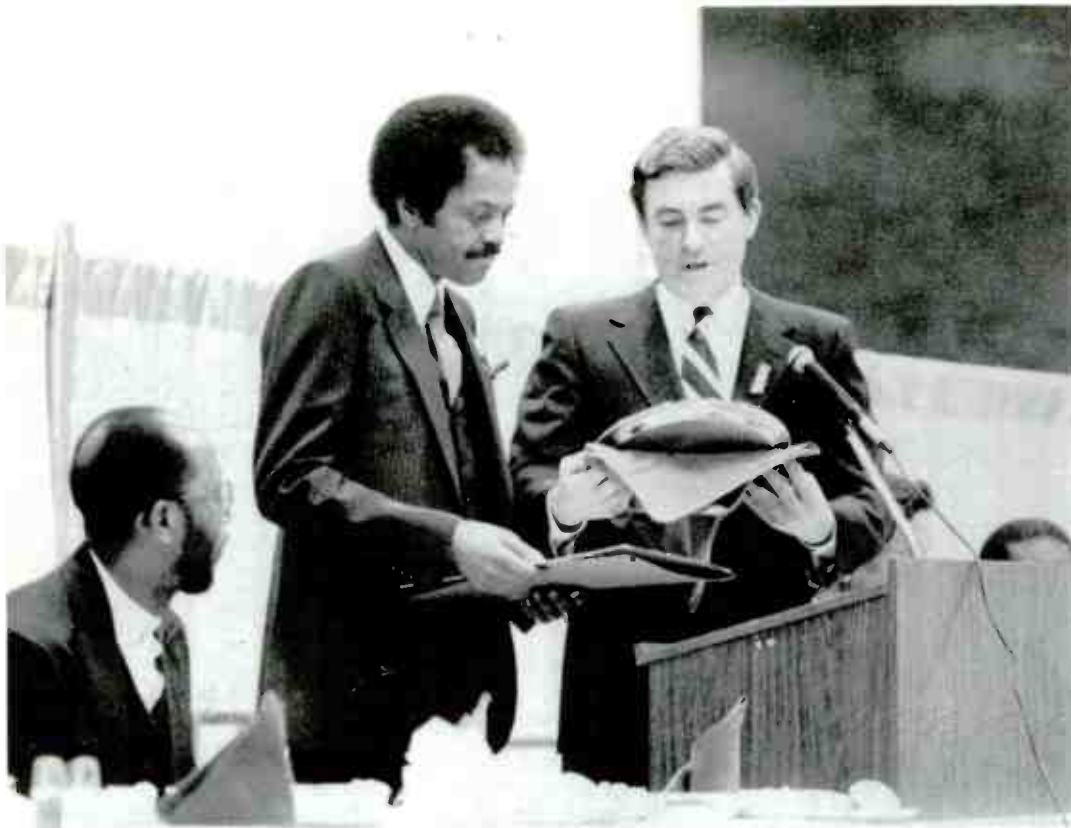
"In appreciation for your invaluable and untiring
support assistance and understanding "

- 1988 The National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice
Distinguished Service Award
"In recognition of devoted and outstanding service in the Criminal
Justice Field."
- 1985 CECIL B. MOORE AWARD
"For Upholding the Principles and for outstanding dedicated
service to the community "
•I said that not only am I a wolf, but I am a lion roaring back,



Everyday People





Leandre Jackson Photo

George receives plaque and proclamation from Philadelphia Mayor William Green, at a dinner held in his honor



George on the attack with Mayor Ed Rendell, 1992

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

fighting for principles and will continue to do so.
Original Black Caucus, P.F.T.

**"THE CHRISTOPHER PERRY AWARD for BROADCASTING
EXCELLENCE OF ISSUES of concern to the BLACK
COMMUNITY "**

1983 Cafe D'Elegance

"With love and appreciation of individual effort and service to the
community as a Commentator "

1982 COOKE J. H. STUDENT BODY/ Dr. N. K. Spencer, Principal
"Cooke J. H. Student Body Salutes Quality "
Philadelphia Philos Humanitarian Award

1981 FRIENDS OF GEORGIE WOODS

"For his continuous dedicated service on behalf of his people and
our city and for his efforts to persuade the community to think and
act on the timely issues relevant to the growth and development of
his people and humanity "

Central North Philadelphia Resource Center

"In appreciation of devoted and valuable services "

Impact Associates Inc./ to G. W. of WDAS radio

"For outstanding leadership and continued commitment in support
of the civic endeavors of Impact Associates, Inc. "

1980 The National Association of Black Accountants, Inc.
Philadelphia Chapter Community Service Award/
Carl Ivey, President

"For your continued efforts in promoting Unity, Community
Development and Political Sophistication throughout Philadelphia"

Sister CLARA MUHAMMAD SCHOOL,
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AWARD BRO. GEORGIE WOODS

"For his efforts and outstanding service to the community at large
and for his keen acceptance of the growing responsibilities that
could not be shouldered without sincere willingness and unending
desire to evolve transition for a better community "

1979 Hearts and Hands Foundation For the Handicapped, Inc.
Distinguished Service Award/G. W. of WDAS -A.M.

"For your understanding and help to the citizens of Philadelphia
when it is needed most"

Philadelphia Evangelistic School/G. W. of WDAS

GEORGIELOGUE

"In recognition of Distinguished Achievement in Community Affairs "

- 1978 Front Page Community Service Award
The MARY DEE AWARD
The American Jewish Committee's Appeal For Human Relations
"Human Relations Award"
- 1975 The Citizens of Philadelphia/to G. W. of WDAS RADIO
- Christmas Season
"For his kind and deep consideration for the less fortunate persons of our community during the Christmas Season of 1975 "
Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, Vocational Schools, High Schools
-Award for Outstanding and Dedicated Service to the Community
- 1973 Philadelphia Philos Humanitarian Award
1968 Club 20 Award
1967 Fifty - Ninth Street Baptist Church, Philadelphia, PA
- Devoted and Faithful Service as Community Leader
1966 Bright Hope Baptist Church
-Award for Community Service
1965 Philadelphia Philos Humanitarian Award
1964 Philadelphia Philos Humanitarian Award
1961 Los Hermanos
-In Appreciation of Services

BUSINESS AND CIVIC AWARDS

- 1991 The Lone Fitzgerald Green Association
-NON VIOLENCE AWARD
1979 The Men of Zion Council of Fifty: "Distinguished Service Award"
1975 Black DuPont Employees Association

The Philadelphia Municipal Court
-The Municipal Court of Philadelphia makes this presentation to
The Man who has given 22 years of his life in dedication and devotion to the youth of our City, in recognition of all the wonderful things this man has done, and will continue to do, for all of us, here in Philadelphia. We honor him today - a Radio and Television Personality - a Family Man - and one who had dedicated himself for the betterment of his community.

-Georgie Woods Day.

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

- 1969 Citizen Award
- 1967 Community Civic Council of Strawberry Mansion with
Cornerstone Baptist Church.
-The Silver Meritorious Achievement Awards
- 1966 United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam Certificate
of Appreciation
-For your outstanding contribution to the Morale and Welfare of
the United States Armed Forces in the Republic of Vietnam.
The Bobby Rydell Show.
- 1961 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
"Distinguished Service Award"

Minister of Broadcasting meets Muslim Minister



Leandre Jackson Photo

Georgie Woods and Minister Conrad Muhammad, Muhammad's Mosque #7 in Harlem,
Sitting in the background, Dr. Muhammad is talking about the Apollo Theater



Leandre Jackson Photo

(l-r) Lorraine Taylor, George, Councilman Herb DeBeary, State Sen. Dave Richardson

Chronology: Georgie Woods Activity

- 1953 Georgie Woods came to WHAT from New York City.
1954 Georgie Woods presents his first Rock 'n Roll show, Thanksgiving Day 1954 at the Met, followed by presentations at the Arena and the Academy of Music.

Georgie Woods presents Rock 'n Roll show; the first at the Mastbaum Theater featuring: Gloria Mann, The Eldorados and the Four Lads.

- 1958 Woods leaves WHAT after contract disputes with station manager Dolly Banks. Woods became the second popular d.j. to leave WHAT, with Jocko Henderson being the first.

Woods, the proclaimed "King of Rock 'n Roll" returns to the air on WDAS after a 3 month absence from radio. He replaces Jocko Henderson on the 9:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. shows.

- 1959 "DEE-JAY LAUDED AS TEENAGERS ADOPT ROLLER SKATING RINK"
* HOPS at Elmwood Skating Rink.
* Woods signs more than 500 autographs.

"ADVERTISEMENT: UPTOWN ON STAGE: GEORGIE WOODS, WDAS"

• Jackie (Moms) Mabley • Bo Didley • The Heart Beats
For 10 Big days

- 1960 Senator Orrin Harris advises A. Leon Higginbotham, Georgie Woods' lawyer, that Georgie's appearance at the Senate Hearings investigating radio payola was not required; the evidence was not sufficient for a conviction.

GEORGIE WOODS at the UPTOWN*

Featuring: The Isley Brothers • James Brown & the Famous Flames • Jerry Butler • Doc Bagby and his Rockin Orchestra • Etta James • The Drifters • Nat Kendrick • Spaniels • Tiny Topsy • Scott Brothers.

*This show grossed \$50,000 for its ten-day stand, a new record for stage shows in Philadelphia. Crowds were turned away Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

-Disc Jockey Georgie Woods visits Pamala Woodruff, 17, in St. Lukes and Children's Medical Center where she had her leg

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

amputated after a motorist mounted the curb at 20th St. and Columbia Ave., killing one and injuring four. Woods starts a radio campaign to raise \$600.00 to buy her an artificial limb.

GEORGIE WOODS at Camden Convention Hall, Camden, N.J.
Featuring: • Ray Charles and the Raelrettes • The Drifters • Mary Johnson • Ruth Brown • Doc Bagby and his Band -Admission \$2, \$2.50 at the door.

Georgie Woods' show returns by popular demand to the Uptown
Featuring: James Brown • Little Anthony and The Imperials • The Shirelles • The Spaniels.

GEORGIE WOODS at the UPTOWN
Featuring: The Flamingos • The Isley Brothers • Marv Johnson • The Miracles, etc.

FCC probes of WDAS radio station

- 1961 GEORGIE WOODS at the UPTOWN
Featuring: • The Bluenotes • The Miracles • Timi Yuro
• The Vibrations • The Spinners • Willie Lewis • Doc Bagby and his Orchestra • The Miller Sisters • Joe Tex

Woods' Seventh anniversary at the UPTOWN. Woods honored with a letter of command, etc.

- 1962 "ADVERTISEMENT: UPTOWN ON STAGE: GEORGIE WOODS, WDAS"

- 1963 "NAACP SHOW at UPTOWN" -GEORGIE WOODS PRODUCTION
With Jackie Wilson; raised \$6,000

•"Cecil Moore Airs Bomb Threats at Mass Rally"

•Roy Wilkins, Kathryn Woodard, Georgie Woods

"ADVERTISEMENT: "UPTOWN ON STAGE: GEORGIE WOODS OF WDAS"

For 10 big days

*GEORGIE WOODS AT MARCH ON WASHINGTON

"Philadelphians 30,000 strong march on nation's capitol, by Rail, Bus, Auto "

GEORGIELOGUE

***WOODS' "FREEDOM CARAVAN"**

"Prayer Offering" - Rev. Sullivan cites Woods as a "great young man" in respect to his work with NAACP

"Blessings for Independent, Del, Cecil, Georgie, NAACP "

-Letter to the Editor

"Cite Man With the Goods "

***Ceremony at UPTOWN: " Georgie Woods Receives Plaque from NAACP for service by Mrs. Gertrude Barnes"**

"Bringing greetings from Radio Station WDAS is
GEORGIE WOODS "

"ADVERTISEMENT: The MOTORTOWN REVIEW at
UPTOWN With GEORGIE WOODS "

• The Miracles • The Marvellettes • Mary Wells • The Temptations
9/20/63 for 10 big days

**"GEORGIE WOODS, NAACP BOARD MEMBER
ARRESTED BY INSPECTOR RIZZO AFTER
ATTEMPTS TO HALT GANG WAR"**

**"DISC JOCKEY BLESSED; WOODS RECEIVES
BLESSING FROM DR. KING "**

**"GEORGIE WOODS, MISS GILDA BAXTER WED;
400 TEEN FANS ATTEND FORMAL CEREMONY"**

**"GEORGIE WOODS OF WDAS PRESENTS HIS 9th
ANNIVERSARY SHOW"**

• Martha & The Vandellas • The Impressions • Patti LaBelle & the
Blue Bells • Freddie Scott, etc.
starts 11/22/63 for 10 days

**"AMONG THE MORE THAN 10,000 at INDEPENDENCE
HALL SERVICE IS GEORGIE WOODS "**

***Memorial Service For J. F. Kennedy**

"NAME SET TO PROBE CRISIS IN RADIO STATION "

***topic " Radio - A look at it's Programming & Personnel "**

***G. Woods, C. B. Moore to attend with others**

"Georgie Woods of WDAS at UPTOWN "

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

- King Curtis • Shep & the Limelites • Flip Wilson
- The Crystals

starts 12/26/63 for 7 Big Days

1964 "UPTOWN THEATER SHOWMEN Featuring " Soul Twisting"
King Curtis and His Band
*G. WOODS, WDAS staged grand, unbeatable Show!

"Busy Making Bonanza Plans for G. Woods star-studded show
1/18/64 at Athletic Club " -Women's Group

"FASHIONS FOR FREEDOM" -Fashion show by
NAACP Freedom Fund; G. Woods & his bride in attendance

"UPTOWN: GEORGIE WOODS OF WDAS"
• The Vibrations • The Drifters • Mary Wells • Patti LaBelle & the
Blue Bells, etc. starts 2/7/64

"GEORGIE WOODS OK AFTER CRASH"
*hospitalized at Germantown Hospital after he had suffered painful
cuts about the head and face when his car skidded into a traffic
island at City Line Avenue & Monument Road last Sunday.
Woods, who is 33, received 15 stitches in face and hand after being
thrown into the windshield of his car when it crashed into a
utility pole.

"GEORGIE WOODS OF WDAS PRESENTS
FREEDOM FUND SHOW OF '64 BENEFIT NAACP
LEGAL DEFENSE FUND "

*Convention Hall 3/17/64 Featuring:
• Sam Cook • Brook Benton • Jackie "Moms" Mabley
• The Drifters • Jerry Butler • Chuck Jackson • The Shirelles

"READY FOR THE SHOW... " Woodard pictured with
Woods recovering at his home from car accident; goes
through more than 500 letters to get well

"NAACP FREEDOM SHOW STILL ON DESPITE
GEORGIE WOODS ACCIDENT"
-Woods narrowly escaped death
-Energetic and devoted chairman of the freedom fund received
many calls from all over the country

Notebook Awards "THE GRAPEVINE" by MASCO YOUNG
*Cites D.J. of the year: Jimmy Bishop, George "Sir" Lancelot

GEORGIELOGUE

Johnson, Lloyd Fatman and GEORGIE WOODS

"UPTOWN: Philadelphia's Newest Radio and Stage
Personality: Jimmy Bishop"

*A GEORGIE WOODS PRODUCTION

"UPTOWN: GEORGIE WOODS OF WDAS"

• Jerry Butler • The Marvelettes • Gladys Knight & The Pips, etc.
starts 5/29/92 for 10 days

"Station WHAT Accused of "PLANTATION METHODS"

"WE LIKE GEORGIE" Boy and Girl Scouts pictured with Woods
at Frankford Men's Council Tea Party

"UPTOWN WITH JIMMY BISHOP"

• The Drifters • Patti LaBelle • Wilson Pickett

*A GEORGIE WOODS PRODUCTION

"GEORGIE WOODS, REGINALD LAVONG BECOME PART
OWNERS OF INDEPENDENT TV STATION"

New TV station owners: GEORGIE WOODS, Aron Katz,
Reginald Lavong, Leonard Stevens

*GEORGIE WOODS & Reginald Lavong became the 1st Negroes
in the U.S. to take part in the ownership of a television station.
They became part of the Philadelphia Television Broadcasting Co.
Inc. which acquired Channel 17.

"GEORGIE WOODS AT UPTOWN"

• B. B. King • Ben E. King • Garnett Mimms

start 8/28/64 For 2 Big Days

"Committee Plans Rally For CECIL"

*Committee includes: Raymond Leslie, GEORGIE WOODS,
BENJAMIN JOHNSON, Wilbur Foster, James Bates, Gus Lacey,
Sam DeShields, Earl Lane, and Walter Rosenbaum

"Philadelphia Independent Charities"

* Douglas "Jocko" Henderson

"GEORGIE WOODS JOINS INDEPENDENT SHOW; TICKETS
STILL AVAILABLE IF YOU HURRY"

- WDAS RADIO star Georgie Woods has joined the vast parade of
show business greats who will appear in the "Swinging Stars
Spectacular" at Convention Hall

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

"WHAT names new Assistant Manager" Richard Harvey

"GEORGIE WOODS at UPTOWN"

- Marvin Gaye • The Marvelettes • Little Anthony & the Imperials
- Little Stevie Wonder • The Supremes

starts 10/16/64 for 10 Big Days

"PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT CHARITY"

@ Convention Hall

Featuring • Douglass "Jocko" Henderson • Popular GEORGIE WOODS • Dolly Banks of WHAT • Chuck Jackson

- James Brown

"Jimmy Bishop at UPTOWN"

- The Impressions • The Temptations • Martha & the Vandellas

* A GEORGIE WOODS PRODUCTION

"Youths Plan Dance" Youths & WDAS Jimmy Bishop Woods and other Philadelphia leaders help to disperse crowds involved in North Philadelphia riot

1965 "Fund Raising Rally set for WPC, NAACP"

- * Jimmy Bishop of WDAS

"Notice of Election 2/6/65 for Philadelphia Branch NAACP"

"WE WANT CECIL MOORE"

- Entire slate of Moore Supporters

- * Woods included

- * Highlights of Cecil B. Moore Administration

"CECIL MOORE RE-ELECTED, CLEARED BY NAT'L OFFICE"

- I'm still the Goddamn Boss, Moore Says After 5-1 Victory

"UPTOWN with GEORGIE WOODS"

- The Drifters • The Vibrations • B. B. King • Patti LaBelle
- The Radiants

starts 2/19/65 for 10 Big Days

"APPRECIATION PARTY " - fashion show and party for Cecil

- * Joe Rainey, Georgie Woods, and Isaiah Crippens

"GEORGIE WOODS, FATHER ANDERSON AMONG

GEORGIELOGUE

PHILADELPHIANS in SELMA “

“White Clerics SAVE GEORGIE WOODS’ LIFE”

* WOODS and Lawrence Henry together stranded at airfield about to get shot by white youth bigots

“JIMMY BISHOP at UPTOWN”

• Joe Tex • The Marvellettes • Chuck Jackson

* A GEORGIE WOODS PRODUCTION

“NEW CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP TO PRESENT KING AIDE”

* North Philadelphia United, the newly Formed civil rights organization headed by Georgie Woods will hold 1st meeting on April 9, 1965 presenting Rev. Abernathy and Fannie Lou Hamer.

1966 Georgie Woods spends two weeks in Vietnam serving as master of ceremonies with a troop of show business performers including singers Bobby Rydell, Judy Lynn, Sandra Brodsky and the Jimmy Wisner Trio. Woods became the first black entertainer to perform for troops in Vietnam.

1967 Woods runs for councilman-at-large on Republican ticket.

1971 Georgie Woods, WDAS D.J., sponsored benefit show for the Hardey Williams Campaign Debt Fund at the Philadelphia Spectrum, Featuring Jean Knight, The Dells, The Originals, The Moments and the UnitedImage.
- Named the nation’s “Best Disc Jockey of 1971” in Chicago by NATRA and elected chairman of the organization.

Woods records ‘Potato Salad’ on the Fat Back label

Woods hosts “The Last Poets”, at the Stardust Inn, Rt. 95 and Flower St. in Chester, PA.

1974 Disc Jockey Georgie Woods honored by over 500 guests at a \$50-a-plate testimonial dinner in recognition of years of Philadelphia broadcasting. Among the guests were Governor Shapp (PA), Secretary of the Commonwealth, C. Delores Tucker and mayoral candidates: William J. Green Jr, Thatcher Longstreth, and Hardy Williams.

Georgie Woods, Radio - TV star gives 5,300 turkeys, 6,300 loaves to needy on Thanksgiving Day, with his promotion partner Jim Walker of Civic Community Baptist Church, 41st and Parkside was the distribution site. Woods solicited money from the

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

recording industry nationwide. \$34,000 altogether was donated.

1975 GEORGIE WOODS DAY PROGRAM, October 3.

- Master of Ceremonies: Don Cornelius

- Invocation Rev. Jesse Jackson

Guest speakers: Mayor Frank Rizzo, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Judge Robert Nix, Ms. Louise Williams, Mr. Carl Helm, Mr. LaBaron Taylor, Mr. Clarence Avant, Melba Moore, and Robert Klein.

Georgie Woods, in his 20th annual distribution of money collected for the needy from record companies, hands out envelopes containing \$50 bills to about 40 men and women at the unemployment office and Food Stamp Center.

Woods presents the Rev. Paul Washington with a \$2500 check for Fire Damages to his Church of the Advocate.

1978 During the Christmas season, Georgie Woods continues his giving tradition by providing \$2,000 to a Philadelphia family that had been burned out of their home.

Woods helps rally public support against Mayor Frank Rizzo's campaign to remove the two-term mayoral limit from the City Charter.

Woods takes part in a commission of Philadelphia's black elected officials investigating race relations in the city, particularly Mayor Rizzo, Police Commissioner Joseph F. O'Neil and District Attorney Edward G. Rendells' handling of the M.O.V.E. eviction and relations between the city police department and the black community.

Georgie Woods raises \$6,000 to aid a family of 19 who lost their home and 5 family members in a tragic Fire.

1979 - Woods and colleagues and supporters of the United Black Concert Promoters of America are arrested after protesting the appearance of black entertainer Michael Henderson at the Bijou Cafe. This was in protest to the monopolization of white promoters in the entertainment industry.

Woods hosts a rally for Consumer Party Candidate Lucien Blackwell.

Georgie Woods named to Charles W. Bowser's Citizens

GEORGIELOGUE

Government Council. The CGC's function is to monitor city government and to draft a constitution for the city's black residents.

Georgie Woods endorses the candidacy of Consumer Party Candidate Lucien E. Blackwell for Mayor of Philadelphia in the November election.

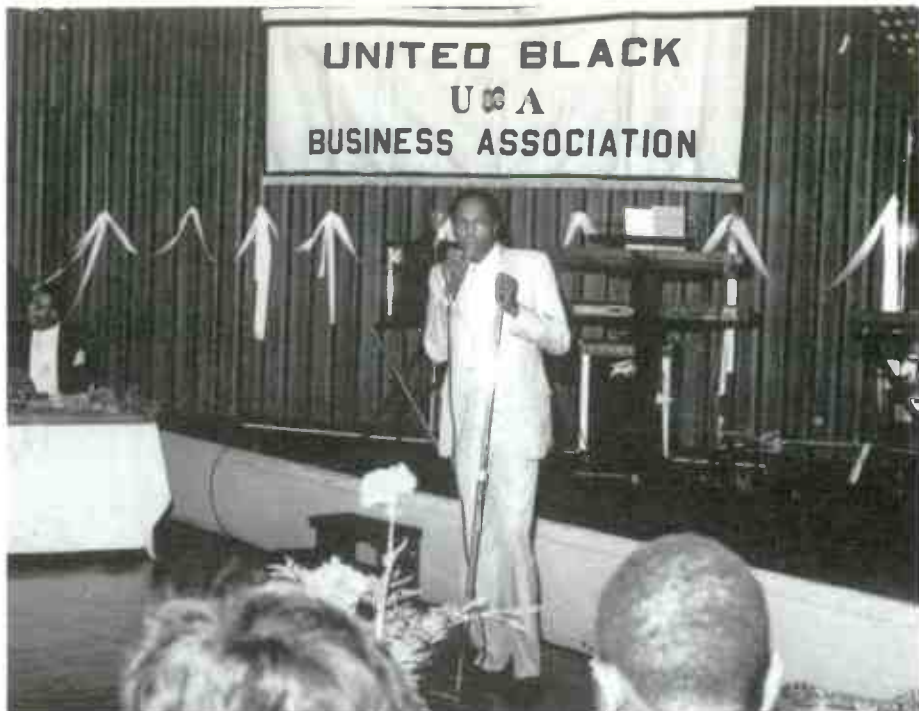
Mayoral candidate William Green writes a letter to the Federal Communications Commission denouncing allegations characterizing WDAS as "racist, inflammatory and detrimental to the well-being of the city." The statements referred to were made on a talk show hosted by Georgie Woods.

- 1980 Georgie Woods involved in active protest of a dumpsite in North Philadelphia by a contractor for the center city commuter tunnel project.
- 1981 Woods participates in a picket at the Philadelphia School Board which was immersed in a teacher's strike.
- 1987 **In 1987 Georgie Woods became the first African-American to have a potato chip named after him. It is now partially available in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, Delaware and New Jersey. It was founded by Saboor Muhammad. Woods has visited many schools in the Philadelphia area where young people were not only inspired by his message but were introduced to the Georgie Wood Potato Chip.**



Georgie with bags and bags of the Chips





(above) **George** speaks to members of UBBA, business organization he co-founded in Philadelphia



George addresses audience at the 25th Anniversary of Girard College's desegregation

Password

by Ed Bradley

The following account appears in Current Biography Yearbook 1988: "At Cheyney State College near Philadelphia." Which he entered in 1959 with Education as his major subject, Bradley met Georgie Woods, a disc jockey for the Philadelphia radio station WDAS-FM. The two men became friends, and one night when Bradley was visiting the station, Woods let him announce a minute of news. In his nervousness, Bradley neither changed the pitch nor added any nuances to his reading. He was understandably dismayed when on regaining control of the microphone, Woods announced, "That was Ed Bradley. He used to sing for the Monotones."

Despite that inauspicious debut Bradley became so hooked on the broadcasting business that he began to spend most of his nights at WDAS working as an unpaid disc jockey and news reporter. Even after he graduated from Cheyney State College in January, 1964 and landed a job teaching the sixth grade in a Philadelphia elementary school, he continued his association with WDAS. One night after hearing a report on another station about a race riot in Philadelphia, Bradley rushed to WDAS, commandeered a tape recorder and an engineer, and spent the next forty-eight hours covering the riot - An act of temerity that finally brought him a job offer from the station. His starting salary was \$1.25 per hour. For the next two years, Bradley was in his words, "a teacher moonlighting as a jazz disc jockey...on top of calling play by play for basketball games and reading news."

Bradley told People Magazine, "I was raised by two people who worked twenty-hour days at two jobs each. They had middle class goals and values, but no middle class money. I was told, "You can be anything you want kid. When you hear that enough, you believe it."

In 1967, Bradley left his elementary school teaching job and WDAS to join WCBS' all news staff in New York. After three and a half years he left for Paris, France with the intention of writing a novel and living the life of an expatriate. Instead he explored the French countryside on motorbike and earned a living doing voice overs for commercials. In September, 1971 he became a stringer for the Paris bureau prior to becoming a TV correspondent in Vietnam. He remained there for one and a half years.

Bradley has been a general assignment reporter with CBS' Washington Bureau and a member of the press brigade covering President Carter. His thorough coverage of the Presidential campaign led CBS to name Bradley one of the three White House Correspondents. At the time he was appointed anchorman of the CBS Sunday Night News he was the only Black network

PASSWORD

news anchorman.

He is the recipient of many awards including the George Foster Peabody Broadcasting Award, Emmy Award, DuPont Award, and the George Polk Journalism Award. He joined the staff of CBS' 60 Minutes in 1981.

The young Cheyney student Georgie Woods invited to WDAS radio station became an internationally known news anchorman. TV Guide referred to Bradley as "one of the finest interviewers on television...a sensitive surgeon whose techniques sheds light instead of heat."

The following interview with Ed Bradley on Georgie Woods is appropriately called Password. It is frank, insightful, and highly revelatory, providing insight not only on the subject but on Bradley as well.

Q. I just want to begin by asking you where and how you met Georgie?

E. I met George in 1964. He came to speak while I was a student at Cheyney State, at the request of Barbara Schmidt, Judge Harvey Schmidt's daughter. She invited George out to talk to a class we had entitled "School and Community," and that's where I met George.

Q. What was your impression of him at that time?

E. Well you know, listen, I grew up listening to Georgie Woods on the radio, so Georgie Woods coming to Cheyney was a big deal.

Q. When did you actually begin working with him?

E. In 1964.

Q. How did you get the job at WDAS?

E. Well, I didn't really get a job at WDAS. I used to just go into the station. I didn't really have a job.

Q. What did you do when you went there?

E. Looking and learning, and going for coffee, going for sandwiches when he asked for sandwiches. I was a gofer.

Q. Had you already decided to go into broadcasting at that time?

E. No I hadn't decided. I was finishing up my senior year in college. I was a student teacher, but I was fascinated by what I saw in broadcasting, and that was what I wanted to do. I thought that was what I wanted to do, but you know I didn't know how to get into it. I'd spent almost four (4) years majoring in elementary education, preparing myself to teach school. Now that I was about

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

to graduate, and move on I had become fascinated by radio and thought that I would love to do this. How do you get a job doing this? I didn't know.

Q: Was Jim Clash in the news department at that time?

E: Yeah.

Q: Was Jim Clash the person you worked with immediately?

E: No. Not at all.

Q: Is that right? So you didn't go to the news department initially?

E: No, no. Through George I met Del Shields. Del Shields took me under his wing.

Q: Del was doing the jazz program at that time?

E: Uh huh.

Q: What was your relationship with Georgie at the station?

E: Well, you know, George was the major figure at the station. George invited me out. Let me give some background. George spoke to our class as I said, and I thought he was rather poorly received. George's grammar is not always 100% perfect. And he addressed the class the way he talked on the radio. He began by saying, "hey everybody! Hi I'll!" And I think that there were some college students who thought that they were perhaps better than he was, better educated than he was. They sort of looked down their nose at him. He was always very perceptive, I found out later. George was aware of what was going on. At one point he said to them, "what I do is communicate with kids. What you are gonna have to do as teachers is communicate with kids, I hope you do it well." I went up to him afterwards just sort of to apologize for what I thought was rude treatment on the part of some of the students. He said "man don't worry about it." Barbara and I invited him down to the snack bar and we went down to the student union, and had some lunch and talked and George invited me out to the station. Several days later I went up to visit him at WDAS. I took one look at all that equipment and I was hooked. I knew that I was put on this earth to be on the radio. So that's how I came to WDAS.

Q: Did you come before the Freedom Show or after?

E: Before.

Q: So were you involved at all with the staff members who planned the show?

PASSWORD

E: I think this was probably 1963, not '64...

Q: During the March on Washington.

E: It was before the March on Washington.

Q: Did you attend the March on Washington?

E: I was one of the bus captains.

Q: Georgie had 9 or 10 buses.

E: I forget how many there were, but I was one of the bus captains.

Q: Were there others volunteers at the station? Were there internships there at that time?

E: No.

Q: So essentially you created a position there for yourself?

E: Right.

Q: There weren't many options for Blacks in radio except WDAS and WHAT at that time?

E: No that was it.

Q: Would you say that the type of leadership Cecil B. Moore brought to the Civil Rights Movement in Philadelphia impacted WDAS in an unusual kind of way?

E: Oh no question.

Q: It was one of the few stations I know of in the city, that was so involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

E: There were a couple of things that happened at WDAS. One, is that the station provided a vehicle, a voice for Cecil Moore. He had a daily show. It was called, "Civil Rights Scoreboard." There Cecil could say basically what he wanted to say with some constraints. I think the person who had to rule on it was John Bandy. Black people in Philadelphia at that time listened to one of two stations primarily, WDAS and WHAT. I think the most popular station then was 'DAS. Certainly I, and most of the people I knew at the time listened

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

to 'DAS more than we listened to 'HAT. Certainly when Georgie was on, Georgie was king of the hill. So what they gave Cecil was a voice to reach that community. You couldn't pay for that kind of time. The second thing that they did was to allow George to become actively involved in the movement. George did things like organize buses for the March on Washington. George brought Dr. King to Philadelphia. George went to the South with Dr. King. He supported him through his actions and through his funds. The third thing that he did was to start these Freedom Spectaculars, to raise money for the NAACP. And it was really through those Freedom Spectaculars that I got my first break on the air. This enabled me to do some music shows. George and Del Shields were involved with the Freedom Shows. Del was a good organizer, a good management person. And he had the skills to do this thing. So the station needed him to help. He couldn't do that and do six hours of music a day. So I started filling in for Del, occasionally, and then frequently, and then full time. I think some time between the first freedom show and the second one, was when George had that accident.

Q: Do you recall the circumstances of that accident?

E: Yeah. George was out at the station drinking a lot. I remember he dropped something on the floor, and George was crawling around on the floor looking for it on his hands and knees. I remember Del and I saying, "George are you okay?" He said, "no problem." And he rode off down that road. Del and I went to see Jimmy Smith (jazz organist) or somebody like that. Later that night we went to Gus Lacey's(52nd and Spruce) and heard that Georgie had an accident.

Q: Do you recall the reaction of his fans at the station following that?

E: I think that there was concern with everyone. But nothing specific.

Q: Did you visit him in the hospital?

E: Uh huh.

Q: Did he discuss how it happened?

E. No.

Q: Did you find Georgie to be a person fairly forthcoming in discussing things of a personal nature?

E: No. I think George was guarded and I think reticent, in some ways. It's understandable. Look at somebody who's in the public eye. You know there's so much of you that is public and your tendency, your natural tendency, is to try and keep something for yourself.

PASSWORD

Q: So the public persona and the more private persona were quite different?

E: No, I didn't say that at all. I just said that George keeps much of himself to himself. I didn't say he was different, I just think there some things about his life that he guards, that are private. Not necessarily different.

Q: John E. Bandy was the only Black manager at WDAS during that time. How would you compare him to George?

E: Night and day. With George, what you see is what you get. While there was part of his life that was private, he wasn't any different privately. But with John Bandy, he had an act. And he had polished that, and fine tuned that persona, so that I don't think that there was any difference, in the same sense, between the public John Bandy, and I don't know what the private John Bandy was, because nobody at DAS saw it. I mean he wasn't social, like the rest of us. Where as we would go out with George, we didn't go out with John Bandy, or John Bandy didn't go out with us. John bandy was different.

Q: Do you recall any shows at the Uptown Theater with George?

E: Oh yeah.

Q: Were you able to go behind stage at this time?

E: Before I met George, I sat in the audience. After I met George, I had the privilege of being back stage.

Q: What was he like backstage prior to the shows.

E: George was relaxed. Always concerned about the house. How many people were in the seats. And always had his wardrobe together.

Q: That was important.

E: Important to George. He had a tailor on 52nd street.

Q: You mentioned having gone to Mr. Silk's Third Base on 52nd street following the show. What hours were you working at WDAS?

E: 4 to 10 p.m.

Q: Did Georgie join other DJ's or were there other DJ's who went to the same place for relaxation?

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

E: Normally Georgie went home.

Q: Is that right?

E: Sometimes we would stay at the station and Georgie used to drink Seagrams , Canadian Club or something. Sometimes we'd just sit around and chew the fat after the show, and talk and have a drink, and Georgie would go his way and we'd go ours. I mean it wasn't like you'd go out every night and hang out, because, for me anyway, I always had school the next morning.

Q: Do you recall Bob Klein's relationship with George at that time? Bob was I guess the general manager at 'DAS at that time.

E: I think they were friendly.

Q: At the time of the '64 "riot," were you with Georgie when he went to Columbia Avenue?

E: Yeah.

Q: Do you recall what actually happened?

E: Well I was out in the streets covering the riots.

Q: You were doing news at that time?

E: Well, that's when I started doing news.

Q: Is that how you began doing news?

E: I mean I had been doing some news in the studio, you know the hourly newscast. But that was when I started really covering stories.

Q: Do you recall the thing that this riot did? I mean how do you compare it to what happened in L.A. recently?

E: Nothings changed but the date.

Q: Were you afraid to cover the 1964 urban uprising in Philly?

E: No, not really, I think I was too naive to be afraid.

Q: Do you feel George had a quieting effect on the people who were uprising?

E: Sure.

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Q: Did he talk about that after he had gone back to the station?

E: You know I was out in the street. I wasn't in the station, I was out in the street where things were happening.

Q: You don't recall a discussion back in the newsroom later on?

E: I know that George was involved with meetings, and talking with Cecil Moore, who was involved with the police in trying to cool things down. I know George had a hand in that. But precisely what it was I don't know.

Q: Can you recall when Malcolm X came to the station?

E: Ah, yeah, a couple times.

Q: Do you recall what your reaction was to the heavy police presence at WDAS when Malcolm came in 1965?

E: Yeah, I just thought it was extraordinary. You know, why were there so many police out there? I mean, were they following you? Were they protecting you? You know, I wasn't sure what their role was. I mean it was unusual. It was unlike anything we'd ever seen. I mean he had been there before without that kind of police presence.

Q: Was there that kind of police presence evident when Martin King came?

E: No.

Q: Do you recall where meetings would be held in the station, say if Malcolm came or King came?

E: Malcolm came because he was on the Joe Rainey show. He came in and went right in the studio.

Q: The late night show. How did Joe Rainey fit into this whole thing?

E: Joe Rainey had a broadcast, and he had guests on his show. You know, people came out, and Joe did his thing, and people left.

Q: So Joe was not in the same role as George in relationship to the Freedom struggle?

E: Well no, Joe had a different role. Joe didn't have the community support or following that George had. He did a very different kind of Broadcaster. Joe

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

had older people. George had kids, as well as older people.

Q: George often mentions having spoken to you about doing news in a monotone. Do you recall him saying that to you?

E: That was the first time I ever did the news on the radio. I was very nervous, and knew that everybody I knew listened to Georgie Woods, so they would be hearing me on the radio for the first time, and I was determined not to make any mistakes. I did a one minute news summary and I didn't make any mistakes, but I never changed tone in my voice, pitch, or anything. And I delivered the news in a very monotone voice. When I finished George said, "Ed Bradley used to sing with the Monotones."

Q: How did you respond to that?

E: I was crushed. My career was over before it got started. But you know, George came back and he said, "hey man, it was good, I was just teasing, don't worry about it."

Q: Had he joked that way before with you?

E: He'd never heard me on the air, I had never been on the air.

Q: Had he joked with you that way before? Was he the kind of person who was fairly jovial in the studio?

E: No. I mean you know he wasn't a joker but he had a nice sense of humor.

Q: Did that change over a period of time?

E: Not to my knowledge. I always thought George had a certain equilibrium to him. I don't think he changed.

Q: Do recall how he responded when you went to CBS?

E: He said, "It's a good break. Make the most of it. Stay in touch."

Q: Did you manage to stay in touch?

E: Well yeah, I've always stayed in touch with him...When I go back to Philly...Not every time I'm there, but we never lost contact. We talk periodically and I see him every now and then.

Q: How would you describe his on air personality prior to you being at the station?

PASSWORD

E: Well you know it was mandatory listening, if you were any where near a radio. If you had a radio on at night, Georgie Woods was on the radio. You listened to George because of the music, because of his banter, because of his sense of what was going on and knowledge of what was going on in the community. All of those things.

Q: How would you assess George's contribution to Philadelphia and Civil Rights in Philadelphia?

E: He was a major factor in the Civil Rights Movement in Philadelphia. He was a facilitator, because it was through George that people in the Civil Rights Movement had access, it was through George that people in the Civil Rights Movement were able to raise money, and through George that people in the Civil Rights movement got one of the most invincible people at that time. I don't know what George's standing is in Philadelphia today, but in those days, (in the '60's), you didn't get any bigger, in that community, than Georgie Woods. Georgie Woods was the guy with the goods. And he was able to deliver to people. So that people in the community had access to him, they had money through him, and they had support through him. George would go and march around Girard College with Cecil Moore.

Q: Do you feel that he has been given the proper recognition in that regard?

E: You know I've been away from Philadelphia for 20 years, more than 20 years, 25 years. So, I don't know how to answer that because I don't know what kind of recognition George has received.

Q: I think you came back for one awards ceremony, is that right?

E: He must have received something.

Q: You came back for one of the award ceremonies for George?

E: Yeah.

Q: Do you recall how that came about...why you came back for that?

E: Hey it was happening, and somebody asked me to come down, I said for George I'll do it.

Q: So throughout the 25 year period you've known him, you maintained a fairly good relationship?

E: Sure.

Georgie Woods: I'm Only A Man

Q: Is that uncommon in this business?

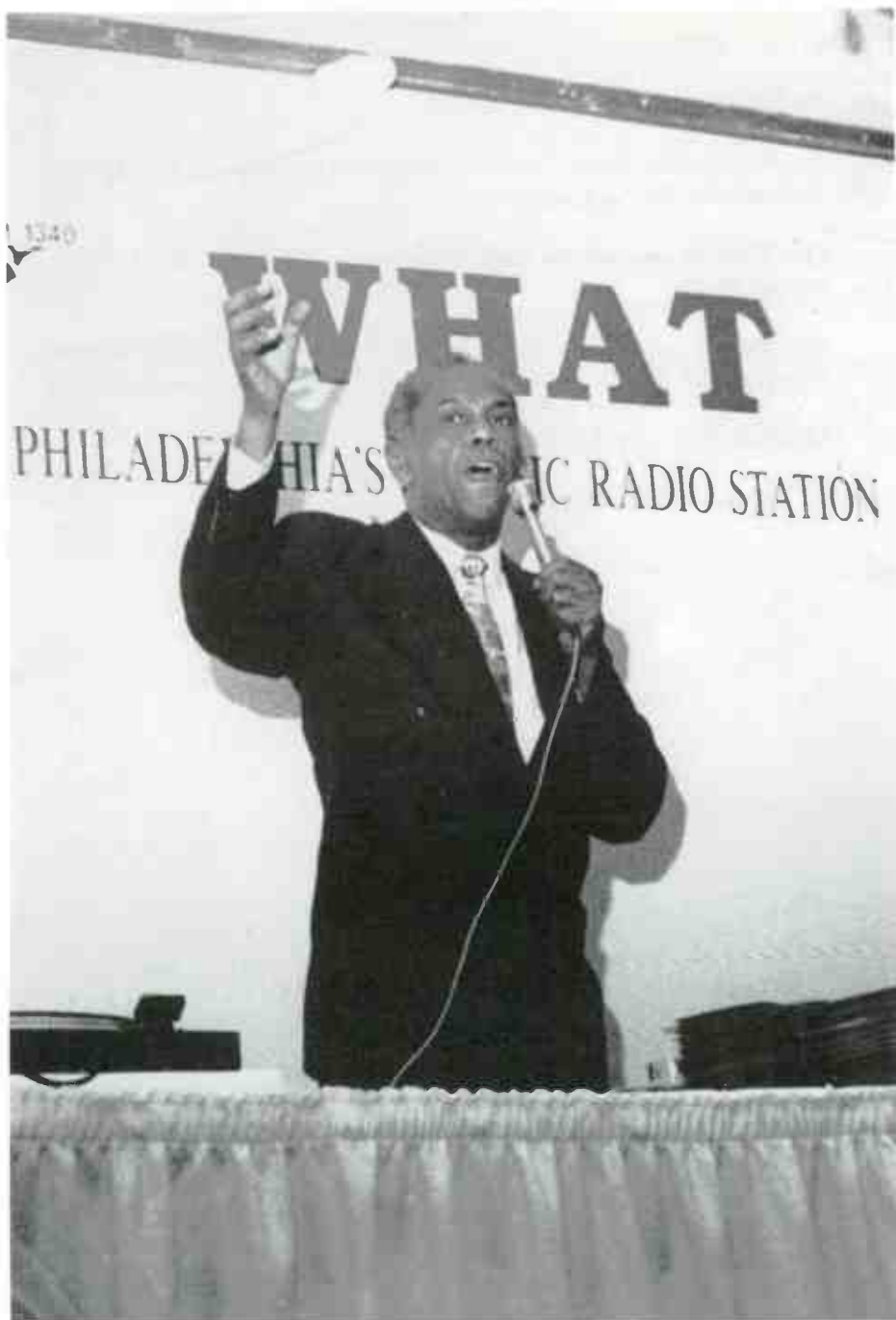
E: I don't think so. I mean I've got a fairly good relationship with a lot of people, but you know George is special.

Q: What lessons can we learn from George's life about Black men in broadcasting?

E: I don't know how to answer that. I don't, I really don't. George has helped a lot of people. And George has had his ups and downs. But he has persevered.

Q: That's the bottom line isn't it?

E: The bottom line is he is a survivor.



The Man With The Goods!

